THE ORIGIN OF EVIL

"Truth is the property of God; the Pursuit of Truth is what belongs to Man."

Von Müller.

THE ORIGIN OF EVIL

AND OTHER SERMONS

Preached in St Peter's, Cranley Gardens

BY THE

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The Origin of Evil.

"The Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."—GENESIS ii. 16, 17.

MY purpose in the present sermon is to show that God is not to be held responsible for the existence of evil.

Assuming that evil is a reality, that it is hateful to God, and that He is more powerful than any other being in the universe, let us ask, How it is that evil exists?

This is a subject upon which much nonsense and unintentional blasphemy have been uttered. There are certain opinions regarding it very commonly held, which inevitably cast a shadow upon the character of God. Most theologians tell us that evil must have been permitted by Him for some wise purpose; but that it is impossible to

imagine what that purpose can have been, and that therefore the existence of evil calls for the exercise of an unlimited amount of faith. In other words, they talk as if reason, apart from faith, would suggest that God ought to have prevented evil, and that, had He done so, we should have found ourselves much more fortunately situated than we are. Now reason, I take it, teaches no such thing. She shows us, on the contrary, that the prevention of evil would have made our world not better than it is, but infinitely worse.

I must ask you, first, to notice that God works, and cannot but work, under certain restrictions, conditions, or limitations. The most sober theologians have always maintained that He could not make wrong right, or right wrong. There have been some celebrated writers—as, for example, Paley and Occam—who asserted that sins are only sins because God has forbidden them. Occam even went so far as to say that God might conceivably command us to hate Him, and it would then be our duty to do so. The more reasonable view, however — in fact the only reasonable view — seems to be, that the distinction between right and wrong is a distinction not made, but *accepted*, by God. This distinction

God could not alter, even if He would. He is good and God because He would not alter it, even if He could. This, then, amounts to saying that God, like ourselves, works under *moral* limitations.

There are other conditions, again, which may be called intellectual, under which He works. He cannot make two and two equal to five. He can create a fifth thing; but that is different. He cannot, again, make the same thing both to be and not to be at the same time. He can annihilate it; but then it has ceased to be. He can recreate it; but then it no longer is not. Now I want to show you that in regard to the existence of evil, God was under a similar limitation.

There are only three conceivable ways in which evil could have been prevented. (1) God might have refrained from creating beings capable of sinning; or (2), having created such beings, He might have kept them from temptation; or (3), allowing them to be tempted, He might have forcibly prevented them from yielding.

Now, no doubt, in one sense, He could have done all these things—*i.e.*, He had power enough. But in another sense He could not have done any of them. They would have been incompatible with His desire to create the best possible world.

Had He destroyed the possibility of evil by any of these expedients, He would (as I shall now try to show) have destroyed at the same time all possibility of goodness.

1st, Suppose that He had created only beings incapable of sinning. That would have been to create nothing higher than a brute. If he had not formed creatures capable of doing wrong, He could not have formed any capable of doing right: for the two things inevitably go together. He only is able to do right, who is able at the same time (if he please) to do wrong. Let me give you a very simple illustration. I wish this desk to hold my sermon-case, and it does so. Do I therefore thank and praise it, and feel grateful to it, and call it good and kind, for obeying me? No! Why? Because it cannot disobey, and for this reason it cannot be properly said to obey. Take, again, the case of the lower animals. At first sight it might seem as if some animals could lay more claim than many men to the possession of a conscience. But it is probable that their best actions are done merely from an instinctive and irresistible impulse of affection. They can, of course, be kept from doing certain things by the knowledge that if they do them they will be punished: they may be cured of steal-

ing, for example, by being whipped when they do steal. But they could not be taught to refrain from it because it was an infringement of another's rights. Since they have no language properly so called, and since (so far as we are able to judge) their reasoning is always restricted to matters connected with the senses, it is unlikely that they ever reach the conceptions of duty and right. This lack of endowment renders it impossible for them to do wrong; and it is manifest that the same lack of endowment must render it equally impossible for them to do right.

Beings incapable of sinning must be ignorant of the difference between right and wrong, or must be destitute of the power of choice, or must always be impelled by irresistible instincts. In none of these cases could their conduct be really moral or right. Had God, therefore, only created creatures of this description, He would, it is true, have prevented the possibility of evil; but He would, at the same time, also have prevented the possibility of good. Nothing, as I said, could have been called into existence higher than a brute.

2d, Suppose that God had resorted to the second expedient,—that after giving us a moral nature, He had shielded us from all temptation.

What would have been the result? Why, this. We could never have attained to the possession of a good character, for that comes only through the conquest of temptation. We might have been innocent as animals, but never upright as men. You mothers, as you look into the smiling faces of your infants, sometimes wish that you could always shield them from the deceits of the world, the flesh and the devil. It is a natural, but an *unwise*, wish. Their present innocence is a quality they possess in common with stocks and stones. If they are ever to rise into the moral sphere, it can only be through the medium of temptation. You should rather wish for them moral conflict,—conflict no matter how fierce and how long protracted, no matter though it call for resistance "even unto blood," so long only as they are victors in the end.

If we take the trees of which Adam and Eve were allowed to eat to represent lawful pleasures, and the tree of which they were not allowed to eat to represent unlawful pleasures, and the command of God to represent the voice of conscience, then the account of Adam's fall will be for us a literal history of our own. Temptation has in *our* case led to a fall, to many falls. We are all constantly falling by eating forbidden fruit. But,

thank God, though temptations have led to our fall, they may lead to our rising eventually to a height which, apart from conflict, we could never have attained. It would have been better for us, no doubt, to have been tempted without falling; but it is better to fall, and to rise again, than never to have experienced temptation: for this is absolutely essential for the moral development of every finite being. Even Christ, divine though He was, had to be made "perfect through suffering"; and much of this suffering was due, we may be sure, to the discipline of temptation. There is a glory possible for you and me, my brother—a regal, godlike glory—which but for moral conflict could never be ours, any more than it could belong to zoophytes or machines. "To him that *overcometh*," says Christ, "will I grant to sit with me on my throne."

But, 3d, it is said that God, at any rate, might have resorted to the last of the three expedients: He might have prevented man's yielding to temptation by giving him at the outset a will strong enough infallibly to resist, or by compelling him on every occasion to use his will in the right way. To say this is, however, to talk nonsense. A will cannot be strong enough to choose only one course, for it is the *essential*

nature of a will that it can choose either of two alternative and opposite courses. Nor can any one possibly be compelled to use his will in a particular way; that would be to deprive him of his will altogether. So long as he has it, there is, in virtue thereof, a choice of conduct open to him. God could, of course, have refrained from making us free; but then we should not have been men—we should have been only automata or brutes. God could, of course, at any moment, deprive us of our wills and make us act in a particular way, but we should then for the time *cease* to be men. A man must be capable of moral action, and a moral agent must be free. A forced goodness is a contradiction in terms. There is no difference in moral value between constrained obedience and free disobedience. If God used a man's will for him, or prevented him from using it in the way he preferred, that man would be no longer responsible for his conduct, and so would be reduced to the level of dead, unreasoning matter. You may keep your boy's hands out of mischief by tying them behind his back; but to the extent to which this takes away from him the power of doing wrong, to the very same extent does it deprive him of the power of doing right. To ask why God did not

give Adam a more perfect will, is as absurd as to ask why the square has not been endowed with the properties of the circle.[1] God could not have given Adam a more perfect will. *Every* will is a perfect will. The perfection of a will consists, not in being able to choose only one course, but in being able to choose either of two alternative courses. Right-doing is praiseworthy *just because it implies* that wrong might have been done but was not. John Stuart Mill argues in his posthumous Essays that had God desired His creatures to be virtuous, He would have made them so if He could. Now, from what I have already said, you will see that to make a man virtuous is an impossibility, even for omnipotence, for it is a contradiction in terms. A man might be divinely compelled to refrain from evil; but if he were so compelled, there would be no moral value in his refraining. Hence compelling him to refrain from evil is not, after all, compelling him to be virtuous. A virtuous character cannot be bestowed upon any one by a creative fiat from without. It must be the outcome of his own free will within. God can create *innocent* beings, and every child that He sends into the world *is*

[1] The philosophical reader will remember a similar argument in Spinoza's 'Ethics.'

innocent; but He cannot create a perfect character; for character is the result of a man's own voluntary choice. So that (Mill notwithstanding) it is "possible for a human being to produce by a succession of efforts what God Himself had no other means of creating."

The origin of evil, then, just like that of good, lies in the power of choice. God must have been (if I may so speak) necessitated, by His very goodness, to create beings capable of goodness. Such beings must be free. And this freedom carries with it an inevitable liability to sin. It lies in the very nature of things, that pleasure and duty must sometimes clash, and that he who is free to choose between them, may sometimes choose amiss. When men were once created, it was not for God —it was for them, and for them alone—to decide whether there should be evil in the world or no. Alas! they have decided that there should. But even so, a world without any human goodness in it, without any noble Christlike men and women, would have been infinitely inferior to our own, in spite of all its wickedness. You must remember that the righteousness of one righteous man will atone for the wickedness of many wicked. Sodom, we are told, would have been spared for the sake of ten righteous persons, Jerusalem for

the sake of one. So that since much evil can be compensated for by a little good, since the prevention of evil would have been the prevention of good, since evil (as the fact has proved) is the necessary concomitant of good, just as shade is the invariable accompaniment of light, it is as absurd to wish that evil had been prevented, as to try and do away with light for the sake of getting rid of shadows.

The Mystery of Suffering.

I.

ITS USES.

"It became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."—HEBREWS ii. 10.

WHY is the world so full of suffering? This is a question which every thoughtful man has asked. But it is answered in different ways. Some say the existence of suffering shows that there is no God, that there is no one in the universe who at once desires our happiness and is capable of effecting it. If any superior intelligence *wishes* us to be happy, he is unable to accomplish his desire, since he often allows us to be miserable. Or, conversely, if he *could* make us happy, since he does not do so, our happiness must be a matter of indifference to him. The

world, so says this class of thinkers, is the outcome of a fortuitous play of atoms, which, on account of their want of reason, produce much mischief and misery, and there is no one in the universe able and willing to prevent them. Other persons, again, take quite a different view. They believe in what they call a God, but they ascribe to him many characteristic attributes of the devil. Their God is full of evil passions, of hatred and malice and vengeance. And they look upon suffering as a sort of vindictive retaliation on the part of this Being, to compensate himself for having been thwarted in his intentions and plans. He is furious with men and women because they do not act as he would like; so he tortures them from sheer spite, and while he is about it, he tortures at the same time the innocent race of brutes. Nay, these persons even go so far as to declare that the whole agony of creation is the punishment of a single act. For one case of disobedience all sentient beings have been placed upon the rack. Others, again, confess that to them the problem of suffering is absolutely insoluble. They worship a Being who is not only *called* God, but who *is* God, who is good and kind, as well as powerful. They believe that He desires the welfare of all His creatures,

and they cannot understand why He does not exercise His omnipotence so as to bring about at once the universal reign of happiness.

Now, I propose to show you that the problem of suffering is not completely insoluble; that sometimes we may discover in *human* misery, at any rate, a rational meaning and a beneficent purpose; and that therefore the existence of pain is not necessarily incompatible with the existence of infinite wisdom and power and love.

The words of our text are full of suggestiveness. "Perfect through sufferings!" We have grown accustomed to this phrase, but it would sound very strangely to any one who heard it for the first time. Perfect through sufferings! he would exclaim. Surely the writer must have made a mistake. He should have said perfect through joy. Suffering must be a sign and a cause of imperfection.

Now, it is quite true that suffering is always a sign of *present* imperfection. But it may be the cause of future perfection which could not be attained without it. On the assumption that the ultimate end of our existence is the development of a noble character, the necessity of suffering may be *proved*. For it can be shown that such

a character could never be produced apart from the instrumentality of pain.

In the first place, suffering acts as a check upon our evil tendencies. Here we may be met with the objection that if God had not allowed sin to exist, the suffering now required to check it would have been unnecessary. We disposed of this difficulty, however, when we were considering the origin of evil. We then saw that the existence of evil could only have been prevented by means which would, at the same time, have prevented the existence of good. And since much evil can be compensated for by a little good, its prevention would have been an irrational and ungodlike act.

Evil, then, being a necessary fact, some suffering is also a necessity. It is the desire for present enjoyment that leads men astray; and they can only be brought back by the counteractive influence of pain. So far as suffering fulfils this purpose, it is manifestly the outcome of love. I say manifestly; and yet the Puritan and Calvinistic theologians never saw it. They erred, in my judgment, in representing God as justice rather than as love; whereas, according to the teaching of Christ, God's justice is but one phase of His love. All He does apparently

in justice, He really does in love. It is just that the sinner should be punished for his sin. Why? Because in no other way can he be made to give up his sin; and this is the consummation Love desires. The suffering which follows sin is, I take it, a token, not of a justice which can only be appeased by wreaking out a certain quantity of agony as an equivalent for a certain quantity of sin, but it is the outcome of a wise and tender love, which punishes only that it may save.[1] Suffering, so far as it corrects evil, is not an argument against, but an argument for, the existence and beneficence of God.

But the point upon which I want chiefly to dwell is, not the negative value of suffering in correcting evil tendencies, but its positive value in developing good ones. It is needless to say there is an enormous amount of suffering in the world which cannot be intended for the punishment of sin, inasmuch as it has to be borne by men, women, and children quite out of proportion to the sins which they have committed; ay, very often they are called upon to suffer because they are *less* sinful than their neighbours.

Now, I want to show you that *unmerited* suf-

[1] See 'Defects of Modern Christianity,' second edition, p. 177.

ferings may be useful and even necessary. Pain has many purposes to fulfil in addition to the eradication of evil. If evil had never existed, suffering would nevertheless have been essential to the perfecting of the human race. Shakespeare, the profoundest of all students of human nature, who knew better than any one else has ever done what made or marred men, says (you remember) in 'As You Like It':—

> "Sweet are the uses of adversity;
> Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
> Wears yet a precious jewel in his head."

Just let us consider one or two of the positive uses of adversity.

Account for it how you may, suffering often acts as an intellectual and spiritual stimulus. The world's greatest teachers have usually been men of sorrow. I do not mean whining, puling, sickly, sentimental sorrow like that of Byron, or Alfred de Musset, or Heine. The sorrow which a man feels because he cannot satisfy his greedy thirst for pleasure is not at all ennobling. But for sorrow manly and heroic, we may well thank God When Dumas asked Reboul, "What made you a poet?" the answer was "Suffering." "If I had not been so great an invalid," said Dr Darwin to a friend, "I should not have done nearly so much

work." "We will not complain," says Thomas Carlyle, "of Dante's miseries: had all gone right with him, as he wished it, Florence would have had another prosperous lord mayor, but the world would have lost the 'Divina Commedia.'" We do not know much about Shakespeare's life; but we do know, from his sonnets, that he had suffered vastly. His heart had been wrung till it almost broke. And in Tennyson we have another striking illustration of the educative effects of suffering. 'In Memoriam' is by far his greatest poem; there are single stanzas in it worth almost all the rest of his works put together; and this poem was inspired by a great grief, by the death, namely, of his friend Arthur Hallam. Nor is it only those who will have a niche in the Temple of Fame that are teachers of sorrow's divine lessons. I have known women of whom the world will never hear, whose whole life was one protracted grief, who, by their patience, their faith, their cheerfulness, their unselfishness, have preached to all who came near them sermons more eloquent by far than were ever delivered from any pulpit—sermons in comparison with which the discourses of Chrysostom or Savonarola must have been tame and dull.[1]

[1] See also 'Defects of Modern Christianity,' second edition, pp. 253-56.

Again, suffering is necessary for the development in us of pity, mercy, and the spirit of self-sacrifice—the noblest of all our endowments. Dr Johnson had a curious notion that pity was acquired by the exercise of reason. He might almost as well have maintained that a blind man could acquire by reason an idea of colour. The well-known line—"haud ignara mali miseris succurrere disco"—contains a profound psychological truth. Only those who have experienced calamity themselves can understand what it means. And unless we know what it is, we cannot sympathise with it; nor are we likely to make any efforts for averting it. No character can be perfect which has not acquired the capacity for pity; for in the acquisition of this capacity we receive our highest development, and realise most fully the solidarity of the race to which we belong.[1] You who know how to pity, and how to benefit another at some pain to yourself, are you not thankful that you have this knowledge? It cost you suffering to learn it, it costs you suffering to practise it. But do you grudge the suffering? I know you do not. Spinoza has a curious definition of suffering, as "the passage to a lower state of perfection." It is much more frequently, I think,

[1] See also 'Agnosticism,' pp. 352-65.

the passage to a higher state of perfection. Spinoza's definition is singularly inconsistent with his own acknowledgment, that the Man of Sorrows was the embodiment of the wisdom and perfection of God. If suffering were really a passage to a lower state of perfection, then we should have this singular anomaly,—that he who was always passing to a lower state came out at last at the highest. Through suffering, says the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, Christ was made perfect. And what is true of Christ, in regard to the helpful effects of suffering, is true in some degree of others. As far as my own experience goes, it is this—the noblest men and the sweetest women I have known have been those who have suffered most. On the other hand, we do sometimes meet with monstrosities who have never suffered—who have never had a single ache or twinge of body, mind, or spirit, since they were born. There are some persons, no doubt, who have little trouble of their own, but are yet pained by the grief of others. They remind one of what Coleridge says of Genevieve in his exquisite poem:—

> "Few sorrows hath she of her own,
> My hope! my joy! my Genevieve!
> She loves me best, whene'er I sing
> The songs that make her grieve."

But there are others who, having no troubles of their own, wilfully blind their eyes and close their hearts against the sorrows that surround them. They decline to take their part in bearing the common burden of human woe. And what contemptible objects they are! They are far less human, in spite of their human form, than many a dog. Well does Mr Greg say in his 'Enigmas of Life,'—"I have seen on the same day brutes at the summit, and men at the foot, of the Great St Bernard, with regard to whom no one would hesitate to assign to the quadruped superiority in all that we call good." Dogs! it is a libel on many a dog to be mentioned in the same breath with these creatures that are ignorant of sorrow. If I were in trouble, I would confide my grief to the rock of flint rather than to them. There is one thing needful to make them men, and that one thing is suffering!

Lastly, some amount of suffering appears necessary for the development in us of self-reliance, self-respect, and all that is implied in the expression "strength of character." And it is only saying the same thing in other words to maintain that, without suffering, we could not attain to the highest *happiness* of which we are capable. Just think, by way of illustration, at the advantages to

be derived from the struggle for success in life, painful as that struggle must often of necessity be. We cannot be born successful, and it would be a great pity if we could. Good fortune and prosperity are worth most when they have been achieved in spite of hindrances and difficulties. The happiness that we have obtained by effort is far sweeter than that which we have inherited, or that which has come to us by chance: and the very effort we have made to acquire it has tended to our own self-development. To be born at the top of the tree, as it is called in common parlance, would be a tremendous misfortune for a man were it not that the name is a misnomer. There is no top of the tree for a finite being. Existence, or rather life, for the king nó less than for the peasant, means progress; and therefore there is hope for a man, notwithstanding the fact of his having been born into a comfortable or exalted sphere. If progress were impossible for him, his lot would be pitiable indeed. And what is true of individuals is true of races. It would have been a grievous disadvantage had they been created fully developed. The possibility of developing themselves is their grandest and noblest prerogative. John Stuart Mill argues in his 'Posthumous Essays' that this would be a better world if the

whole human race were already in possession of everything which it seems desirable they should have. But surely it is infinitely better for races to struggle up to material prosperity and to spiritual perfection than to have been created incapable of progress. In the latter case they might have been comfortable and satisfied: but their comfort and satisfaction would have been no higher than a brute's.

It would seem, then, that pain, difficulty, trial, grief—in one word, suffering—is absolutely essential to our highest development and our greatest good. Most truly therefore may suffering be represented as an angel, sent to earth from the throne of God; and most truly may she be regarded as uttering the words Mr Greg ascribes to her:—

"I am one of those bright angels
Passing earthwards, to and fro,
Heavenly messengers to mortals,
Now of gladness, now of woe.

Might I bring from the Almighty
Strength from Him who maketh strong;
Not as alms I drop the blessing,—
From my grasp it must be wrung.

Child of earth, I come to prove thee,
Hardly, sternly with thee deal;
To mould thee in the forge and furnace,
Make thine iron tempered steel.

Come, then, and in loving warfare
  Let us wrestle, tug, and strain,
Till thy breath comes thick and panting,
  And the sweat pours down like rain.

Man with angel thus contending,
  Angel-like in strength shall grow,
And the might of the Immortal
  Pass into the mortal so."

The Mystery of Suffering.

II.

THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.

"It became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."—HEBREWS ii. 10.

I HAVE already offered you one or two suggestions tending to show that perfection of character was produced, and could only be produced, by means of suffering. I propose now to take a concrete example—viz., the character of Christ. In the present sermon I shall give you a slight sketch of His sufferings. In the next sermon we will endeavour to trace their effect in bringing about His perfection.

Well, to begin with, Christ was poor. The trade to which he was apprenticed would be anything but lucrative in a small village like Naz-

areth. The house in which he dwelt would be no better than the houses of artisans in Nazareth at the present day, which consist of but one room, serving at once for shop, kitchen, and bedroom: they are lighted only by the door, and are almost destitute of furniture. Thus, for thirty years Christ lived in one of the smallest houses, of the most disregarded village, of the most despised province, of a conquered land. His poverty must have caused Him suffering, not so much because of the privations it involved, as because it induced His contemporaries to despise His teaching. In those days, to be poor was to be contemptible. Hillel had said so, and that was enough. "Is not this the carpenter?" asked one. "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" inquired another. "Out of Galilee ariseth no prophet," said a third. All were agreed that it was absurd to look for moral or religious instruction from a man of such low extraction and such mean surroundings. Christ would be constantly reminded that His social position was the greatest barrier to His usefulness in the world.

Again, He suffered from the physical pains that flesh is heir to. In common with the fallen sons of the Father, He had to earn His bread by the sweat of His brow; and such earnings must

sometimes involve pain. Christ suffered, too, like other men — and more than most men — from hunger and thirst, from exposure to heat and cold, from sleepless nights, and from the numberless and nameless ills that arise from a delicate constitution. We might have guessed that He could not be physically strong. There are souls that *consume* the bodies in which they dwell. Severe mental conflict and intense moral earnestness are rarely, if ever, combined with perfect health. Christ at any rate, we find from our New Testaments, was weak and frail. For example, He was weary with His journey to Samaria, and sat on the well to rest; but the disciples were not fatigued—they went away directly to buy food. In one of their discussions the Jews said to Him, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" They did not guess, owing to His worn and wasted appearance, that He was little more than thirty. He fainted under the burden of the cross; but the other prisoners did not faint. He died, moreover, more quickly than was usually the case; so that when the soldiers came, according to custom, to put an end to His torture, they found Him already dead.

Again, what unspeakable misery is involved in the word homeless! It matters little how melan-

choly in other respects may be a man's life, if only he have a happy home. In that case, in spite of all his troubles, his is an enviable lot. However isolated and worried he may feel when in the outside world, if there be somewhere a spot which he calls home, and which really deserves that name, then he is a happy man. Though his lot may have been cast in a desert, yet it is a desert that contains an oasis, to which he can constantly return. *There* are to be found sparkling streams and refreshing shade; and there the wayworn, footsore traveller may rest and be refreshed. There, for a little season, the weary can find repose and the sorrowing sympathy. There, by the subtle power of love, burdens are lightened, disappointments are alleviated, and the saddest heart is cheered. I imagine there would be many more madmen and suicides in the world than there are, were it not for the blessedness of home. But Christ was homeless. "The foxes have holes," He said, "and the birds of the air nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head."

Once more. Christ suffered from intellectual, moral, and social isolation. He was very little appreciated by any one, and entirely misunderstood by all. He felt that He was born to a

godlike work. A mysterious purpose lay in His heart, which was to lead the Father's fallen sons to glory. The very nature of this purpose would, as Dr Young remarks, make Him more keenly susceptible, and more eagerly desirous for sympathy. But in regard to the one great object of His life, He stood entirely alone. The Pharisees and Scribes, and the upper classes generally, opposed Him, not only on account of His poverty, but also on account of His doctrines. He had kind words for the publicans and harlots, but none for them. The common people at first heard Him gladly; but when they found He had no intention of improving their earthly circumstances, they became dissatisfied. As Christ put it, they only followed Him because of the miracle of the loaves. They wanted bread for the body, not food for the mind. His own relations, too, were an obstacle in His path. "Not even His brethren believed on Him." Christ must have suffered inexpressibly in seeing how little spiritual good He was accomplishing. His very disciples seemed to make no progress. They understood Him as little at the end of His ministry as at the beginning. For example, Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father." He did not perceive that Christ's whole life had been one prolonged

manifestation of God. James and John wanted to call down fire on the inhabitants of a Samaritan village. How infinitely far must they have been, at that time, from the kingdom of God! Peter rebuked Him for prophesying His own death, and was thus, as Christ said, a real stumbling-block in His way. He was urging Him, as the devil did in the wilderness, to sacrifice God and the world rather than Himself. Peter could discover no needs-be in the humiliation and death of Christ. He would have been quite content with a throne for his Master: he did not desire a cross. And so it was with the rest of the disciples. They persisted in thinking, notwithstanding all Christ could say to the contrary, that He intended to deliver the Jews from the dominion of the Romans; they could not grasp the notion that He wished to deliver *all men* from the dominion of sin. They would have it that He ought to be king of the Jews: it never entered into their thoughts that He was to be the Saviour of the world. They were willing to struggle and to fight, if they might thereby secure for their Master an earthly empire; but they could not appreciate, nor even comprehend, that kingdom of righteousness which it was Christ's sole aim to establish. This misunder-

standing would lead, of course, to want of sympathy. Daily and almost hourly Christ must have been pained by proofs of their selfishness; and He must have been sadly prepared for their conduct at the last, when one betrayed Him for thirty pieces of silver, another denied on oath having ever had anything to do with Him, and all the rest forsook Him and fled.

Once more. "Christ suffered being tempted." Temptation was to Him as real as to us. He would have fallen, as we sometimes fall, unless He had resisted as we ought always to resist. "He passed through the moral conflict," says Pressensé, "as we do, with all the perils of freedom. If it is maintained that He could not have yielded to temptation, and that He knew it all along, His humanity remains only an illusion, and He was not really tempted at all. Let us bring Christ down from this cold empyrean of theology and receive that sublime text, 'He learned obedience'; which signifies that from a state of natural innocence, He was to raise Himself to the holiness that follows choice. A perilous transit; but in it Christ conquered,—conquered by the sole arms of faith and prayer, and not by girding on Godhood as an impenetrable panoply."

The same view is taken by Canon Farrar. "Some," he says, "have claimed for Christ not only actual sinlessness, but a nature to which sin was miraculously impossible. What then? If His great conflict were a mere deceptive phantasmagoria, how can the narrative of it profit us? If we have to fight the battle clad in the armour of human free-will, which has been hacked and riven about our bosom by so many a cruel blow, what comfort is it to us if our great Captain fought, not only victoriously, but without real danger, not only uninjured, but without even the possibility of a wound? Where is the warrior's courage, if he knows that for him there is but the semblance of a battle against the simulacrum of a foe? They who would thus honour Him rob us of our living Christ, and substitute for Him a perilous phantom, incapable of kindling devotion or inspiring trust."

The account of *the* Temptation, as it is called, is generally understood in a more or less allegorical sense. Origen, Lange, Schleiermacher, Olshausen, Neander, and Calvin understood it thus. But it is, at any rate, an allegorical representation of a *fact*,—the fact, namely, that Jesus Christ was brought face to face with the powers of darkness, and had to struggle in order to overcome.

"Command that these stones be made bread," said the tempter. In other words: Spend those powers in the service of the senses and the body, which ought only to be spent in the service of God. "Cast Thyself down from hence." In other words: Improvidence and presumption would be no sin in Thee, if Thou art the Son of God. "All these things will I give Thee if Thou wilt fall down and worship me." In other words: Would it not be better to gain the world in the service of the devil than to lose it in the service of God? The alternatives presented to Christ were very similar to those presented to every member of the human race. He was called on to decide whether or not He would sacrifice duty to pleasure; whether He would take His ease, or work the work of God; whether He would strive for temporal prosperity, or seek the salvation of the world. This temptation was constantly being repeated by His disciples and by His relations. "Since Thou canst do these things," said the latter, "show Thyself to the world," and take what the world will give Thee. He conquered, as we know; but the amount of suffering involved in the conquest is not easily realised. He had to choose between selfishness and self-sacrifice. He determined to obey instead of to be obeyed. He

accepted shame instead of glory. He drew on Himself execration instead of popularity. He consigned Himself to a cross instead of to a throne. If you doubt the agony involved in all this, try and imagine what *you* would have suffered under similar circumstances. Would not the conflict have torn your very heart in twain?

Further, as Ullmann has observed, the Man of Sorrows must have been always enduring the *temptation of suffering*, in one of its many forms. Not only did He suffer being tempted, but He was tempted being in suffering. We have seen that suffering may be, and frequently is, a means to moral progress; but it has also its drawbacks and disadvantages. It brings with it temptations to fretfulness, to repining, to faithlessness, and, if it be very severe, the temptation which poor Job felt, to curse God and die.

Lastly, Christ suffered death. And the fact that His death was no ordinary death, may be clearly seen in the agony He experienced in the anticipation of it. It was no vulgar fear of dying, we may be sure, that so weighed down the Saviour's spirit. It was rather sorrow for the blindness and hardness of those who had rejected Him; sorrow for the comparative failure of His life. The inducement to make a compromise with the

Pharisees must now have been very strong. He had accomplished little in the world as yet; but He was only thirty-three; He might do so much if He could only live. He might then "*see* of the travail of His soul and be satisfied," instead of having to die in the faith. Death by crucifixion, too, was socially the most ignominious, and physically the most agonising, which it was possible to endure. It was a Roman punishment, which was only inflicted upon slaves or captives. The crucifixion of a Roman citizen would have been considered a reflection upon the dignity of Rome. "It includes all that death can have of the horrible and ghastly. Dizziness, cramp, thirst, tetanus, starvation, sleeplessness, fever, publicity of shame, mortification of untended wounds,—all intensified just up to that point at which they can be endured, but all stopping short, for long weary hours, of the point which gives to the sufferer the relief of unconsciousness. Every variety of anguish went on increasing, until the crucified yearned for death as for a delicious and exquisite release."

All His previous sufferings, moreover, were gathered up and repeated with tenfold intensity upon Calvary. He was poorer than ever now, for His very clothes were being divided among His executioners: more homeless than ever now, since

His last resting-place was a cross: more tempted than ever now, since the temptations that are born of anguish had reached their climax; more isolated than ever now, for not only were the Pharisees against Him, but the common people, who had once heard Him gladly, were ridiculing and insulting Him: and the single disciple who was there to see the end, as well as the three Marys who were with Him, had a wondering pity depicted in their countenances, that seemed to say they had hoped better things from Him, that seemed to reproach Him with the failure of His life. To crown all, in His last moments Christ experienced that ineffable bitterness of spirit compared to which all other suffering is joy—the feeling that He was forsaken by God. From His breaking heart was wrung the bitter cry, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

Die on now, O Saviour of mankind! Now truly Thou canst say, "It is finished." "Thou hast learned obedience with strong crying and tears." Thou hast drunk to the dregs the cup which the Father hath given Thee. Thou hast sacrificed Thyself wholly, unreservedly. Thou hast omitted nothing that could help us to see the beauty and divinity of self-sacrificing love. Thou hast been made "perfect through sufferings."

The Mystery of Suffering.

III.

THE EFFECT OF CHRIST'S SUFFERING UPON HIS CHARACTER.

"It became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."—HEBREWS ii. 10.

IN the last sermon I endeavoured to give you a slight sketch of the sufferings of Christ. I propose in the present sermon to point out one or two of the ways in which these sufferings would appear to have tended to the perfecting of His character.

First of all, what do you suppose that Christ was like in person? There are two statements in the Bible which are generally understood as referring to Him. "He was altogether lovely." "His countenance was more marred than all the

sons of men." Now I apprehend that both these statements were literally true. The painters who have represented Christ with a smooth and placid face have made, I think, a great mistake. We have seen that He was in bad health towards the close of his life, and that he looked much older than he really was. The fact that his temptations and afflictions were so numerous and so severe, renders it almost indisputable that His countenance would be *marred.* Yet we may be sure that, to those who had eyes to see it, the face of Christ was beautiful. There are two distinct kinds of beauty. The soft, rosy, dimpled, laughing face, lovely though it be, is not the only fair countenance the world contains. No. Is there not beauty also in a face like that of Livingstone's, all covered with scars and seams? For does not each one of those so-called deformities tell of moral conflicts and moral victories, of profound thought and intense feeling, of tremendous earnestness and enthusiasm, of self-abnegation and self-conquest? To those who had no spiritual insight Christ would appear "as a root out of a dry ground," having "no form nor comeliness": but in reality, "the beauty of the Lord God was upon Him."

We have seen how solitary Christ was—intel-

lectually, morally, and socially. No one understood His purposes, no one cared for His ideal morality, no one sympathised with Him in His efforts to make the world better. But it is not difficult to see how this painful experience tended to His general self-development, and how in particular it increased His moral strength. The man will never be worth much who is always on good terms with every one, who is continually courted and petted by all with whom he comes in contact. He who is content to take everything as he finds it, who has never had an idea which the meanest of his neighbours could not appreciate, who has never felt himself morally indignant with any of his surroundings, such a person is not half a man.

Lonely as Christ was socially, He often courted physical solitude as well, and many a night He passed by Himself on the silent slopes of the Mount of Olives. He who would know something of the greatness and the infinite possibilities of his own nature must do the same. We *lose* ourselves in the company of our fellows: we *find* ourselves when alone. I pity the man who has never stood upon the mountain-side, or in some retired spot, far away from the "din of human words"—stood there in the dusk of even-

ing or the gloom of night, till the silence became intense enough to make him feel—

> "So lonely 'twas that God Himself
> Scarce seemèd there to be."

He who has not had some such experience as this knows little more of the mystery of his own nature than does the child yet unborn. The intense mental tension that accompanies such physical isolation is akin to pain. But how blessed it is in its results! A man learns in solitude something of his own capabilities. He learns that he is not like a drop in the ocean, obliged to move with the tide; nor like a leaf in the forest, obliged to bend to the wind; but that he is a free and godlike agent, and that, feeble as he has been accustomed to think himself, he is in reality strong enough to resist a universe of evil, and to conquer even death and hell. Christ's isolation, social and physical, made Him calmly and divinely self-reliant. How strong He was! Since the world began, there have been no such scathing denunciations as He uttered against the Pharisees and Scribes,—uttered to their very face and in the hearing of the populace, though He knew all the while that they had power to put Him to death.

Isolation, moreover, tends not only to self-

development, or to the growth of a man's self-consciousness, but also to the intensification of his God-consciousness. It not only teaches him how great he is in himself, but it also reveals to him how much greater is the God from whom his own greatness is derived. At first it makes him feel that he is alone; but afterwards he perceives that God is with him. I suppose that most of us have had more or less experience of this, amid the lonely scenes of nature. Wordsworth says of the Wanderer that—

> "In the mountains did he *feel* his faith;
> . . . . . Nor did he believe, he SAW."

But *social* isolation—that is, want of sympathy and appreciation—still more, perhaps, than mere physical solitude, tends to the development of our God-consciousness. "It is not till we feel we are alone on earth, that we know for a certainty we are not alone in heaven." It was the utter want of sympathy that Christ experienced which, more than anything else, taught Him to say, "I am not alone, for the Father is with me." Moreover, this want of human sympathy, of which His homelessness formed a conspicuous part, combined with the sorrowful tenor of His whole life, must have made it easier for Him to set His affections entirely upon His mission—

upon the accomplishment of the Father's will. So long as He acted conscientiously, there would be nothing to live for in this world, and hence it was but natural for Him (so to speak) to dwell in another. This idea is well expressed by John Henry Newman:—

> "Thrice bless'd are they who feel their loneliness,
> . . . . . .
> Till, sick at heart, beyond the veil they fly,
> Seeking His presence who alone can bless."

How completely Christ lived beyond the veil! "I have meat to eat," He said to His disciples, "that ye know not of." And He spoke of Himself as the "Son of Man *which is in heaven.*"

With regard to Christ's temptations, I need only repeat what we have already seen, that unless He had *suffered* under them, He would not really have been tempted; and that without temptation it is impossible to acquire a perfect character, or indeed any character at all.

Once more, we have seen that pity, tenderness, mercy, compassion and self-sacrifice, which are essential elements in a perfect character, can only be developed by suffering. If you want any further proof of this, look at the great cruelty of young boys, who have, generally speaking (unless, from being delicate, they understand what suffer-

ing means), no greater delight than to cause pain. Tennyson speaks of some one who was

> "As cruel as a schoolboy, ere he grow
> To pity."

It is not till the schoolboy begins to experience suffering, that he ceases to take delight in inflicting it.

Now He who was pre-eminently acquainted with grief, was pre-eminently remarkable for His tenderness and compassion. Read those loving words of His to the disciples, and His prayer for them as recorded in the fourteenth and following chapters of St John. He knew that the darkest scenes of His life were at hand, yet He thought only of comforting *them*. This pity He manifested all through His ministry, under the most varied circumstances. Listen: "Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not."—"Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? Neither do I condemn thee."—"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"—"Go into all the world and preach the remission of sins, beginning at Jerusalem,"

the scene of His crucifixion.—"Could ye not watch with me one hour? The spirit, indeed, was willing, but the flesh was weak."—"Son, behold thy mother! Woman, behold thy son!"—"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

The death of Christ was the perfecting of His perfection. It was the last and steepest step of the altar of self-sacrifice He had been so long ascending. All the sufferings of His previous life were, as we have seen, there gathered up and consummated. He who had borne all His previous troubles unblenchingly, shrank and shuddered at the thought of Cavalry and the anguish it involved. We saw that, among other things, it meant leaving the world when He had, to all outward appearance, scarcely accomplished anything. We saw that the inducement must have been terribly strong to parley with conscience, to make a compromise with the Pharisees, to do evil that good might come. This temptation would be the severest He had ever experienced, and overcoming it must have involved the extremest suffering. But had He failed here, all would have been lost. He would have shown that He was unselfish, but only within certain limits. He would

have shown that He had faith in God, but only up to a certain point. He would have proved Himself in the battle with sin a brave soldier, but conquerable, and therefore unfitted to be the Captain of our salvation. But He persevered even unto death. The cross has ever since been a symbol and synonym of all that Christ thought and did and was. And rightly so; for it was the summing up and completion of all.

> "In the Cross of Christ we glory,
> Towering o'er the wrecks of time;
> All the light of sacred story
> Gathers round its head sublime."

Well, now, is He not perfect, this Man of Sorrows? Did He not unite in Himself all good qualities which in others are only found apart, and even then in an inferior degree? Do we not find in Him, for example, more than the tenderness of woman, combined with more than the strength of man? Has not the story of His self-sacrificing love purified many of the vilest hearts, and brought some of the most abandoned of the devil's votaries to the very feet of God? Did not everything good in the world before Christ point to something better far in Him? Does not everything that is best in the world to-day owe its origin to Him? How much of

what is sweetest in art, how much of what is noblest in life, would never have existed but for Christ! Must we not thank Him for all that is most beautiful in our social intercourse, in our friendships, in our homes? Can you not trace His influence wherever there is progress in right and freedom and toleration and joy? The thoughts of the Nazarene lie at the basis of modern civilisation, and are inextricably bound up with the future progress of the world.[1]

The glory of Christ has been seen and acknowledged not only by clergymen, not only by orthodox Trinitarians, not only by those who profess to be entirely consecrated to His service; but wherever He has been understood, He has been invariably admired, and more or less believed in, if not loved. Nearly all the greatest minds of the last two thousand years, though holding the most divergent religious opinions, and differing perhaps in regard to almost every other subject, have been unanimous in their praise of Christ. Milton, Shakespeare, Galileo, Kepler, Bacon, Newton, Spinoza, Kant, Schelling, Hegel, Herder, Goethe, Napoleon, Jean Paul Richter, Carlyle, Rousseau, Renan, John Stuart Mill, and a host of others, have been at one in lauding the beauty

[1] See also p. 323.

of His life, the wisdom of His teaching, the blessedness of His work. For instance, Napoleon said, "Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, and myself, founded great empires; but the creations of our genius depended upon force. Jesus alone founded His empire upon love, and to this day millions would die for Him." Richter said, "Christ was the holiest among the mighty, and the mightiest among the holy. He lifted with His pierced hands empires off their hinges; He turned the stream of history, and still governs the ages." Rousseau said, "If the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus were those of a God." Renan has said, "Thanks to Jesus, the dullest existence, the most absorbed by sad and humiliating duties, has had its glimpse of heaven:" and again, "To tear the name of Jesus from the world would be to shake it to its very foundations."

And there have been some who have conceived for Him a passionately enthusiastic devotion, that was a copy—and not a faint copy either—of His own self-sacrificing love. There have been some who have surrendered for Christ pleasure, money, fame, health, family, friends, position, prospects, life; who for His sake have suffered the loss of all things. There have been some who, for Christ's

sake, were tortured, and had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, and bonds and imprisonment; who wandered over deserts and dwelt in caves; who were destitute, afflicted, tormented; who were stoned, or sawn asunder, or slain with the sword; and who not only endured these things, but *gloried* in them, counting it ALL JOY that they were thought worthy to suffer shame for Christ. And there have been many—a vast multitude that no man can number, belonging to all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues —who, though coming short of this enthusiastic devotion, have yet loved and served Christ to the best of *their* ability, following Him sometimes closely, sometimes from afar off; sometimes forsaking Him, but always returning to Him again. They differ from one another in all conceivable respects; they agree in nothing save their love for Christ. And this love is no superficial sentimentalism, no transitory caprice. It is the deepest reality in their lives. It is slowly — very slowly, alas! but still surely and perceptibly— transforming their inclinations and aims, so that for them "old things are passing away, and all things are becoming new."

And Christ's influence is by no means restricted to those who professedly admire and love Him.

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Many, unknown to themselves, have caught something of His divine spirit of self-abnegation. Of all the best and noblest men now living, whether they profess to be Christ's disciples or not, it may, without hesitation, be affirmed that they are ready to deny themselves for the welfare of others; and that, to a greater or less extent, they have merged their own life and wellbeing in the life and wellbeing of the race. From whom can they have learnt this enthusiasm for humanity if not from the crucified Nazarene? Must He not then have been perfect, this Man of Sorrows, to have accomplished such effects as these?

The Mystery of Suffering.

IV.

DIFFICULTIES OF THE SUBJECT.

"It became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."—HEBREWS ii. 10.

OUR line of thought in the previous sermons has been that the existence of suffering, so far as it tends to the perfecting of character, is not an argument against, but an argument for, the beneficence of God. It must be admitted, however, that all suffering does not appear to have this beneficial tendency. It may have occurred to some of you already, that suffering sometimes seems to have a hardening, rather than a softening, effect; in some cases it seems not to improve, but rather to deteriorate, character. Upon this point I would offer two remarks.

First, the man who is apparently injured by suffering may be in reality benefited. He may seem, to the careless observer, to be very harsh and bitter; but those who know him more intimately may discover an infinite depth of tenderness, underlying this superficial cynicism. A striking example of this was afforded by the late George Dawson. He had experienced the severest trials, the greatest of all being this, that his only daughter, who as a child had been brilliantly clever, became at the age of twenty, owing to over-study, very nearly an idiot. Well, one Sunday, he astonished his congregation, who were accustomed to clever sermons from him, by preaching a peculiar discourse, consisting of the shortest sentences and the simplest ideas, fit only for an infant class. The explanation was this: his daughter was at church that morning, and her mind happened, as he knew, to be less obscured than usual. The sermon was addressed to her. The text was, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." Now the man who could do this must have been possessed of the very rarest tenderness; yet if you had met him only casually, you would have said he was the most cynical and misanthropical person you had ever known. So

that, I say, suffering, even when it seems to have injured any one, may, after all, have had the opposite effect.

But, secondly, I do not deny—I acknowledge—that suffering does occasionally deteriorate character. You remember the words which Shakespeare puts into the mouths of the two murderers in 'Macbeth.' The first of them says—

> "I am one, my liege,
> Whom the vile blows and buffets of the world
> Have so incensed, that I am reckless what
> I do to spite the world."

The second says—

> "And I another
> So weary with disasters, tugged with fortune,
> That I would set my life on any chance
> To mend it, or be rid on't."

It is in the moral as in the physical sphere; the self-same causes will produce, under different circumstances, totally different results. The most useful agents in nature have sometimes the most deadly effects. The atmosphere, which is essential to life, is the chief source of putrefaction and decay. The sea, which bears one mariner safely to the desired haven, buries another in a watery grave. Electricity, which carries a message across the world at the bidding of one man, strikes another dead. So the very circumstances of which

a good man makes stepping-stones to heaven, a bad man will turn into a pathway to hell. The responsibility for this, however, rests not with God, but with men. As we saw in considering the origin of evil, we must be free, or we should not be moral agents; and being free, it is for us, not for God, to decide how we shall deal with our opportunities and temptations.

But further, it must be acknowledged that there is an immense amount of suffering in the world, the *inevitable tendency* of which is to develop evil and to stifle good. Thousands at home and abroad are brought up in the midst of filth, obscenity and blasphemy, so that for them health, virtue and religion are impossibilities. Justice seems to demand that these men and women should not be made to suffer in the future for the sins which were unavoidable in their case in the past; and that, somehow and somewhere, they should receive compensation for all the calamities which they suffered here on earth. If there be a future life where compensation can be made, then this suffering, horrible as it at first sight appears, does not necessarily tell against either the power or goodness of God. Even these hapless souls may by and by be able to say that it was "good for them to be afflicted."

But what shall we say in regard to the sufferings of the brute creation? Ages before man appeared on the earth, animals were "groaning and travailing in pain together," having to bear the pangs of disease and death, and in most cases being preyed upon and devoured by creatures stronger than themselves. They will probably continue to suffer long after human life has become extinct upon our planet. Their sensuous suffering is at least as great as ours.

> "The poor beetle, that we tread upon,
> In corporal sufferance finds as great a pang
> As when a giant dies."

And they have few of the reliefs of suffering which we enjoy. They seldom get the benefit of medical advice or surgical skill. They do not often, except when we choose to make pets of them, meet with manifestations of sympathy. They have no mental resources, as we have, for alleviating physical pains. They cannot, like Pascal, cure the toothache with mathematics. They cannot, like you or me, forget their troubles by taking up an amusing book or resorting to cheerful society. If, when they die, they die for ever, it follows that, in being deprived of the pleasures of sense, they lose their little all. What have they done to deserve this? Nothing.

Indeed, some of them, in spite of their poor mental endowments, have exhibited a wealth of affection and self-sacrifice such as is rarely found in human beings. What are we to make of their sufferings?

Of course, the old theory that they result from man's fall is worse than worthless. For, in the first place, no reason can be shown why they should be made to suffer for our transgressions; and, in the second place, they began to suffer long before man came into existence. Horace Bushnell, in his 'Moral Uses of Dark Things,' has an interesting and suggestive chapter upon physical pain; but I cannot accept his solution of the problem. He argues that God foresaw the fall, and prepared the world accordingly—that is, He made it a suitable habitation for sinners. "The very rocks of the world," he says, "are monuments of buried pain, themselves also racked and contorted, as if meant to be lithograph types of general anguish. Making all the world follow the fortunes of man, and in some sense go down with him and groan with him in his evil, carries with it an immense power of moral benefit. No matter if the pains were initiated long ages before his arrival, still they are just as truly of him, and from him, as if they had come after."

But this cannot be the meaning of the sufferings of the animal creation. To make the innocent suffer for the guilty would be unjust and immoral, and could not possibly, therefore, carry with it any "power of moral benefit." Bushnell says that animals are *merely things*, and not in any such relation to God as to have a moral right against pain. To this I reply, that if they are but things, they are in no such relation to *us* as to have a moral right against pain; and that, therefore, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals is engaged in as foolish a work as would be an association for preventing tourists from cutting their initials upon trees, or geologists from breaking the rocks with their hammers.

Justice would seem to require that somehow and somewhere, the brute creation should receive compensation for the vast amount of unmerited suffering which they have been called on to endure. The idea of a future for animals would generally be considered extremely heterodox and absurd. There is nothing, however, in the Bible against it.[1] And Bishop Butler (the author of the celebrated 'Analogy,' a book in which most of the bishops examine candidates for holy

[1] For the meaning of the often-quoted verse in Ecclesiastes (iii. 21), see my 'Agnosticism, and other Sermons,' p. 204.

orders) justly says that there is no reason why animals should not be immortal, and that many of the arguments commonly urged in favour of human immortality are equally applicable to theirs. "Even if it were necessary for animals," says Butler, "to arrive at great attainments, and become rational and moral agents, even in this there would be no difficulty, since we know not with what latent powers they may be endowed." In fact, it seems a general law of nature that creatures, endowed with capacities of virtue and religion, should be at first placed in a condition in which they are altogether without the use of these faculties. This is the case, for example, with ourselves in infancy; and since a large proportion of the human species die soon after they are born, it follows that many, capable of becoming moral agents, go out of the present world before they have reached the moral stage of being. And further, contends the Bishop, the lower animals might be immortal even though they were incapable of any high development. The economy of the universe might require that there should always be living creatures of an inferior kind. And all difficulties, he concludes, as to the manner in which they would be disposed of, are so wholly founded in our ignorance,

that "it is wonderful they should be insisted upon by any but such as are weak enough to think that they are acquainted with the whole system of things."

There seems no reason, then, why we should not hope

> "That nothing walks with aimless feet;
> That not one life shall be destroy'd,
> Or cast as rubbish to the void,
> When God hath made the pile complete;
>
> That not a worm is cloven in vain;
> That not a moth with vain desire
> Is shrivel'd in a *fruitless* fire,
> Or but subserves another's gain."

But it must also be added,—

> "Behold, we know not anything;
> I can but trust that good shall fall
> At last—far off—at last, to all,
> And every winter change to spring.
>
> So runs my dream: but what am I?
> An infant crying in the night:
> An infant crying for the light:
> And with no language but a cry."

Leaving, then, what is doubtful, let us sum up the actual results of our investigation. We have seen that evil could not have been prevented without the prevention of a more than compensatory amount of good. The existence of suffering, so far as it is required for the destruc-

tion of evil, is manifestly not a curse, but a blessing. We noticed, too, how much there was to be learnt from sorrow that could never be learnt from joy. The world's most inspired teachers have generally been men of suffering. As Shelley finely says,—

> "Most wretched men are cradled into poetry by wrong;
> They learn in suffering what they teach in song."

We noticed, again, that battling with adverse circumstances, though painful while it lasts, gives us a self-respect and a claim to the respect of others which we could not otherwise acquire. We saw that social isolation and want of sympathy threw a man back upon himself, made him self-reliant, taught him something of the infinite possibilities of his nature, and, above all, enabled him more vividly and blessedly to realise the presence of God. We saw, too, that some kind of suffering was absolutely essential to the development of the benevolent affections, such as pity, tenderness, and the spirit of self-sacrifice, without which every character must be contemptible. As a general rule, the men and women who have suffered much are sweeter and nobler than those who have suffered little. Even Christ, we are told in the Epistle to the Hebrews, required the discipline of grief. Now, since a perfect

character is the best of all possessions, cheaply purchased (if need be) by a long protracted agony of pain, those sufferings which are required to bring us to perfection must be regarded as proofs of the great Father's care. If God failed to inflict them, if He interfered to prevent them, He would not be a God of love.

Hence we have found a rational basis—small it may be, but immovably secure—for that faith which believes that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed; that our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; that the Creator is the Father of His creatures, extending His tender mercies over all His works, and leading the whole creation by a right way, though it be oftentimes by a way they do not understand. With this foundation for our faith, we may look forward with sure and certain hope to that

> "One far-off divine event
> To which the whole creation moves."

Just as a grain of seed falls into the ground and dies, that it may rise again the blade, the ear, the full corn in the ear; just as babyhood gives place to childhood, childhood to youth, youth to

manhood; just as the sublimest music involves the resolution of discords; just as there are men and women in the world to-day who feel already more than compensated for the toils, struggles, and privations of the past — who can say with Newman,

> "I would not miss one sigh or tear,
> Heart-pang, or throbbing brow:
> Sweet was the chastisement severe,
> And sweet its memory now;"—

so *all* the chances and changes of this mortal life are but preparations for a better, where we shall be made glad according to the days wherein we have been afflicted, and the years in which we have seen evil, with a gladness *sweeter*, *purer*, *deeper* than could ever have been ours but for those days of evil and those years of affliction.

The Formation of Character.

I.

HUMILITY.

"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; . . . but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."—PHILIPPIANS iii. 12-14.

I PROPOSE in this and the four following sermons to discuss some fundamental principles, which it is absolutely essential for us to bear in mind, if we would succeed in forming for ourselves a perfect character. Let us look, in the first instance, at the virtue of humility, which is the prerequisite, the *sine quâ non*, of the attainment of moral perfection.

Aristotle, in his 'Ethics,' gives a curious description of what he considered an ideal character. The "large souled" or "high minded"

man occupies himself entirely with honour. He receives a certain amount of pleasure, just so much as is compatible with his dignity, when the illustrious treat him with respect; but he justly despises the majority of his neighbours. He hates to accept a favour, for he wants his superiority to be universally recognised. When he is compelled to accept presents, he always gives larger presents in return, so that he may never be under an obligation. There is nothing which he considers great: hence he never wonders. His lofty-mindedness even shows itself by his speaking in a loud voice, and walking with a stately gait. This ideal, as Aristotle himself pointed out, could, of course, only be attained by a man of birth, brains, and wealth. If others aimed at it, the virtue of magnanimity became, in them, the vice of conceit.

Now, as Aristotle always tested the correctness of his doctrines by their agreement or disagreement with popular opinions and practices, we may be sure that, in this description, he was only generalising views which were common at the time. And though, owing mainly to the influence of Christ, such grotesque exhibitions of pride would no longer be tolerated, that vice is even yet more frequently to be met with than

any other human failing. "Other vices," says Dr Johnson, "tyrannise over particular ages, and triumph in particular countries. Rage is a failing of youth, avarice of age. Revenge is the predominant passion of one country, avarice of another. But pride is a native of every country, infects every climate, and corrupts every nation."

What makes pride so common is the fact that it can adapt itself to all circumstances, it can be exercised upon *anything*. It is just taking too exalted an estimate of our own qualities, because they are our own. If a man has no good characteristics of which to be proud, he will pride himself on bad ones. As old John Berridge quaintly puts it, "Pride has such a wonderful appetite that it can feed kindly even on grease and garbage. It will be as warm and snug in a cloister as in a palace, and be equally delighted with a foul oath and a fine prayer." The virtuous man thinks too much of himself on account of his virtue, while the thoroughly vicious man plumes himself on the success and magnitude of his crimes. Some take pride in being rich, others in being poor; some in good clothes, others in bad; some in their education, others in their want of education; some in having had a grandfather, others in the fact that they are self-made;

some are proud of being religious, others of being irreligious; some of their asceticism, others of their luxuriousness; some take pride in being proud and in showing that they are proud, others in an ostentatious exhibition of humility. The Cynic philosophers were very proud of their supposed freedom from pride. "I trample upon the pride of Plato," said Diogenes. "Yes," said Plato, "but it is with another kind of pride." Socrates once said very naïvely to Antisthenes, "I see your vanity through your threadbare cloak." This is the worst kind of pride. The devil's darling sin, as Coleridge has it, is the pride that apes humility.

Now the evil effects of pride are manifest. It is incompatible, first of all, with sympathy and philanthropy, which are among the surest manifestations of the Christian life and character. If we despise our neighbours, we can take no interest in their welfare; and even if we did we could not do them any good. You cannot really benefit any one unless you respect him. You may contemptuously fling half-a-crown to a poor man, but your unkind demeanour will have done him more harm morally, than can be compensated for by any physical good that the thirty pence are capable of accomplishing. And this want of

sympathy is visited upon the proud man's own head. He cannot but live a lonely, isolated, melancholy life.

Again, pride is at the bottom of most of the quarrels of the human race,—quarrels, of course, quite incompatible with a perfect Christian character. You may trace its influence in civil and international wars, in private duels and family feuds, and in the religious persecutions which have done so much to bring the name of religion into contempt, and to justify the sarcastic exclamation of Lucretius, "To so many *evils* has religion persuaded men." Looking on their own set of opinions as an absolute standard of saving truth, men have come to the conclusion that all who differed from themselves must be children of the devil, whom it was a work of piety to despise, excommunicate, anathematise, torture, and slay.

Once more, pride is incompatible with progress, mental or moral. The man who is proud of the achievements of his intellect proves by his very pride the incurable denseness of his ignorance. "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him." The fool who is conscious of his folly has already advanced far on the road to wisdom; but the

man who thinks he is already wise is proceeding in the opposite direction,—is approaching nearer and nearer to idiocy every day. Similarly in the moral sphere. He who is proud of his virtues, who thanks God that he is not as other men, has reached his moral goal, such as it is, and he will be quite content to stay there. But he cannot stay there. In the moral sphere there is no standing still. Every man who is not making progress is really retrogressing. So the proud Pharisee is not only a very sorry specimen of virtue to begin with, but he is constantly becoming sorrier. He grows contented with less and less actual merit, and makes up for the diminution of his virtue by the increase of his insufferable pride.

Having thus seen the unreasonableness of pride, let us look for a moment at the reasonableness of humility. The word, as you see, is derived from *humus*, the ground, and is therefore equivalent to the Saxon word lowliness. It is also synonymous with modesty, which latter term is derived from *modus*, a measure, and means therefore the measuring faculty. All this is instructive. Humility being synonymous with modesty, will mean, not under-estimating, but correctly estimating ourselves. "I believe," says

Ruskin, "the first test of the truly great man is his humility. I do not mean by humility doubt of his own powers, or hesitation to speak his opinions; but a right understanding of the relation between what he can say and do, and the rest of the world's sayings and doings. Arnolfo knows that he can build a good dome at Florence, Albert Dürer writes calmly, to one who has found fault with his work, that it cannot be better done. Sir Isaac Newton knows that he has worked out a problem or two that would have puzzled any one else. Only they do not expect their fellow-men to fall down and worship them. They have a curious under-sense of powerlessness, feeling that the greatness is not *in* them, but *through* them; that they could not be or do anything else than God made them; and they see something divine and God-made in every other man they meet." Hence, just as there is a seeming humility which is nothing but pride, so there may be a seeming pride which is really humility.

However, though it is not our duty to underestimate ourselves, we must bear in mind that only a lowly self-valuation can be correct. The man who is possessed of the measuring faculty will be aware that for everything he can do well, there are hundreds of things he can effect but

indifferently, and hundreds more that he cannot do at all; that for every thing he knows, there are thousands and tens of thousands of things of which he is ignorant; that though he may possess good qualities, he is not without bad; that if in certain particulars he is really wiser and better than his neighbours, this superiority is due in a great degree to the fact that he has been placed in more favourable circumstances; and that his improvement under those circumstances has been by no means proportionate to the advantages which they offer. If we would but reflect, we should sometimes discover that it was we ourselves who deserved the scorn we were so lavishly bestowing upon others. I have not unfrequently caught myself, I am sorry to say, despising persons for certain opinions and practices, which I by and by remembered were once my own, and would probably have been so still, had not some tutor or professor or writer or friend taught me a more excellent way.

When one's pride is thus changed by reflection into humility, contempt is at the same time converted into sympathy. And sympathy is the chief criterion of the perfect Christian character. By sympathy we can make men better, whereas

by contempt we only make them worse. Byron says of the Corsair,—

> "There was a laughing devil in his sneer,
> That raised emotions both of hate and fear."

Sneering only excites what is bad in men. If you want to raise or teach them, you must appeal to their better nature; you must treat them with sympathy, and even with respect. And this of course you will never do unless you have formed a lowly estimate of yourself.

Then, again, humility is a means to progress. When we realise how little we know, and not till then, we shall yearn and strive to know more. When we feel how imperfect is our character, and not till then, we shall make earnest efforts after improvement. Our success in life, whether moral or social, our making the best use of our opportunities, temporal and spiritual, will depend very greatly upon our forming a correct estimate of ourselves. Swift truly says, "No man ever made an ill figure who understood his own talents, nor a good one who mistook them." The humble man, seeing what is within the scope of his present power, does it; and every such achievement paves the way for greater. The proud man, on the contrary, will perhaps make one or two spasmodic endeavours to attain something that is quite beyond his reach, and after he has failed,

will give up all further effort in disgust. Many a man fails to become great merely because he cannot become great all at once.

> "That low man seeks a little thing to do,
> Sees it and does it:
> This high man, with a great thing to pursue,
> *Dies* ere he knows it.
>
> That low man goes on adding one to one,
> His hundred's soon hit:
> This high man, aiming at a million,
> Misses an unit."

Let me, in conclusion, remind you that there is nothing mean—nothing of the Uriah Heep—in true humility. A genuine humility will increase our self-respect. We must surely esteem ourselves, when honestly endeavouring to ascertain our merits and defects, *more* not less, than when we were laying a flattering unction to our souls, which we might have known all along to be false. It is only the humble man who has any right to self-respect. Milton speaks somewhere of a "lowliness majestic." The profoundest humility is perfectly compatible with the profoundest veneration for one's own God-made nature. Although correct self-valuation involves the recognition of our present littleness, it also includes the realisation of our potential greatness. This latter element is most important,—as important for the building up of a perfect character, as it is

for getting on in the world. Unless we take a lowly view of our actual attainments, we shall see no necessity for persevering efforts to get on. Unless we take a lofty view of our possible future, we shall lack the patience and the courage to endure. This is the rationale of Christ's doctrine of humility. He that exalteth himself shall be abased; in other words, he who would make himself out to be already great, is, and will ever be, infinitesimally small. On the contrary, he that humbleth himself—he that thinks little of his present worth—shall by and by be exalted; shall by and by become really great. But this exaltation will be in the eyes of others rather than his own. He will still take a lowly estimate of himself. If you see an ear of corn holding itself very high, you may be sure there is nothing in it; and a similar inference may be drawn in regard to a human head. The more a man knows, the clearer becomes his consciousness of ignorance. The greater his virtues, the more keenly sensible is he of his defects. The nearer he approaches to perfection, the more strongly does he feel that his aspirations can only be fully realised in the great hereafter. Then only may we hope to be like Him, when we see Him as He is.

The Formation of Character.

II.

THE NECESSITY FOR FAITH.[1]

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."—MATTHEW v. 48.

IF we are to obey the *injunction* of the text, it is necessary that we have faith in the *fact.*

Faith, in the first instance, seems necessary to a hearty endeavour after goodness. I am bound in common honesty to admit that there have been "men to whom the dignity of manhood and the fellowship of this life, undazzled by the magic of any revelation, unholpen by promises of anything higher or more enduring than the fruition of human love and the fulfilment of human duties, are sufficient to bear the weight of life and death."

[1] This subject is discussed more fully in my 'Basis of Religion.'

I am bound in common honesty to admit that there are men here and there who, with no conscious faith in God revealed by Christ, are yet living noble, useful, self-denying lives, spending and being spent for others, taking the most enthusiastic interest in all that concerns the well-being of their fellow-men, content to work for blessings to be enjoyed by humanity, when they themselves shall have passed (as they think) into non-existence. I marvel at the goodness of these men, but I confess to you frankly that I could not hope to imitate it if I held their creed. And I think I do no injustice to the majority of men when I say, that they would be equally incapable of this irreligious morality. If there be no loving God, the universe is fundamentally and thoroughly irrational and immoral. Just think of it. Just run over its history as sketched for us by nineteenth-century materialists. In the beginning there was an infinite number of dead, inanimate atoms. These, falling through space, came into contact with one another, and by their haphazard concurrence were evolved, first of all a mass of fiery vapour, and then worlds, animals, men, instinct, reason, memory, imagination, will, thought, worship, love. If this were all, we might rest content; we might feel that evolution was only

a mode of mind,—that it was the method in which God worked. But this is not all, according to the materialistic philosophers. They sketch for us the future work of evolution as well as the past, and that future work consists in undoing everything that has been done. Instinct, reason, memory, imagination, will, thought, worship, love, are all to pass away and be no more. The planets and the stars, after having lasted long enough to be the charnel-houses of the sentient creatures which at some time or other probably existed upon all of them, will gradually be forced together into one central mass, which will radiate its heat into space, and at last become a frozen block. That is to be the *dénouement.* The curtain of history is to fall upon a lump of ice![1] If, then, the universe be so fundamentally irrational and so diabolically tantalising, why (I cannot help asking myself)—why should I trouble myself about character? If in so ridiculous and contemptible a world there be one thing more stupid than another, would it not be the attempt to act as if we were rational and moral beings?

[1] See Clifford's Lectures and Essays. If the laws of nature turn out to be less exact and unchangeable than has been commonly supposed, the end, though less tame, would be equally undesirable.

Would not a belief in the reality of right and wrong be the maddest of all delusions? What does it matter, what can it matter, how I act, if my life be but a momentary and accidental gleam of consciousness in the passage of the atoms from the fiery cloud to the frozen block? Surely there can be no right and wrong for a being who has been made, and who will be unmade, at the caprice of dead, unthinking atoms. I am certain I may say for myself—I think I may venture, may I not? to say for most of you—that if we believed ourselves to be in a godless, soulless universe, our moral progress would be at an end; we should be stricken with the paralysis of despair.[1]

But whether or not faith in God be necessary to *stimulate* you and me to try and form for our-

[1] My reviewer in the 'Westminster' says I speak here foolishly, not to say immorally. That is, of course, precisely what I meant to do. My argument is, that if the materialistic assumptions be *logically followed out*, foolish thinking and speaking and acting are the inevitable consequences.

It has been suggested to me by a correspondent that a disbelief in immortality is the greatest stimulus to kindliness and self-denial; that if we are thoroughly convinced the present life is the only life men will have, we shall be all the more anxious to do what we can for them here and now. But surely belief in the essential irrationality and immorality of the universe can never afford a *logical* basis for rational and moral conduct.

selves a perfect character, there is one thing very certain, it is absolutely necessary, if we are ever to succeed in *achieving* such a character. For we are morally very weak, and we need superhuman help. Without Christ we can do (comparatively at any rate) nothing. St Paul was assuredly *not weaker* than other men, but you remember his passionate lamentation—"To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. . . . I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" This is no rhetorical rhapsody, but mere sober fact, as our own experience may suffice to show. How often, when we know and approve the right, do we reject it and choose the wrong! How often have we tried in vain to give up evil habits! How often have our efforts to live worthily ended only in disappointment and remorse! Every one who is not totally destitute of a conscience, must in effect have sometimes despondingly declared—

> 'I see, but cannot reach, the height
> That lies for ever in the light;
> And still, for ever and for ever,
> What seeming just within my grasp,
> I feel my feeble hands unclasp,
> And sink, discouraged, into night."

Now, it is implied in our text, it is taught throughout the New Testament, and it is confirmed by experience, that there is nothing so morally helpful as faith in God. We shall not be surprised at the practical value and the moral effects of faith, if we consider for a moment all that it implies. It implies, first of all, a conviction that the forces of nature are being made to work together for good, under the guidance and control of an intelligent and beneficent Will. If so, it is worth our while to strive after perfection. Do not misunderstand my phrase "worth our while." I am not thinking only nor chiefly of rewards and punishments. That would be a very low view to take of the matter. There is nothing more contemptible than the other-worldliness manifested by numbers of men and women, who seem to regard the working out of salvation as a mere business transaction, in which, by the performance of a few disagreeable actions in the present, they purchase for themselves the title to a comfortable state of existence by and by.

What I meant by saying that, on the Christian view of things, it was worth our while to strive after perfection, was this. On the Christian view the universe is rationally organised and morally governed, and therefore attempting to act rationally and morally is attempting to bring one's self into harmony with one's surroundings. Whereas, on the atheistic view, since there is no rationality or goodness outside of us, endeavouring to be wise or good is, in reality, going contrary to nature,—acting in opposition to the laws of the universe. If Christianity be true, it signifies but little what becomes of that which we call matter. It may be the case, it probably is the case, as Shelley has magnificently put it in his 'Hellas'—

> "Worlds on worlds are rolling ever
> From creation to decay,
> Like the bubbles on a river
> Sparkling, bursting, borne away."

But the man of faith is not to be dismayed by the dissolution of a planet, nor a system, nor a galaxy of stars. He sees a "ring of light round nature's last eclipse." He believes that before Nature is dissolved, if that be her future destiny, the universe will have been peopled with beings capable of an eternally intensifying life. So

that, whatever be the end of Nature, she will, at all events, have been subservient to rational and moral ends. Hence it is evident that to be in harmony with Nature—in other words, to be in harmony with those surroundings upon which our welfare depends—we must live a rational and moral life. In the conviction, then, of the existence and beneficence of God, we find a reasonable basis for morality.

But, once more. Faith implies much more than conviction. It is an unfortunate thing that the word belief should be so frequently used as a synonym for faith. Belief is not faith.

St James, you remember, says, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe." The devils are as religious as you are, if your belief in the existence of God constitutes the whole of your religion. Suppose a man believes in Thirty-Nine Articles (or, for the matter of that, in 399), if his religion ends there, what is he the better for it? He might just as well be without it. Suppose a man believes in the righteousness and binding force of the Ten Commandments,—and breaks them all, his belief, so far from making him a good man, is the strongest proof of his unutterable degradation. No more demoralising doctrine was ever taught

by ignorant fanatics than the doctrine that a man's mental belief will save him. "What doth it profit, my brethren," says St James, "though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? . . . Faith, if it hath not works, is dead." Luther did not care for the Epistle of James. He called it an epistle of straw, and would have liked to expunge it from the Bible. But the doctrine of St James is most certainly the doctrine of Christ. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father." The doctrine of St James is also that of St Paul. The faith which St James says cannot save is the faith of mere belief. The faith which St Paul says can save is the faith that "worketh by love." The proper synonym for faith is trust; and trust is an affection of the heart, not a faculty of the head. It is the acting out of belief. "Christian faith," says Dr Bushnell, "is the faith of a transaction; it is not the committing of one's thought in assent to a proposition, but it is the trusting of one's being to a Being, there to be rested, kept, guided, moulded, governed, and possessed for ever." That passionate devotion to Himself which Christ required from His followers, and which He describes in vehement terms

as "eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of Man," is evidently something very different from a mere passive intellectual belief. To have faith in God is to have had one's heart beating in sympathetic unison with God's heart; to have been inspired with the divine enthusiasm for righteousness; to have felt *one with God* in nature, in sympathy, in aim.

Once more. Faith implies joy in the present life and hope for the future; and these are states of mind peculiarly conducive to right-doing. The tendency of the atheistic theory is to drive men to despair, than which there is nothing more enervating and more deadening to all the higher faculties. The late Professor Clifford (who, curiously enough, began his career at Cambridge as a ritualist and ended it as an atheist) speaks in touchingly pathetic words of his change of views. "We have seen," he says, "the spring sun shine out of an empty heaven upon a soulless earth; we have felt with utter loneliness that the Great Companion was dead." And John Stuart Mill (who was brought up an atheist, but at the close of his life was verging towards Theism, not to say Christianity) tells us, in the saddest of all autobiographies, how for many months he suffered such deep distress from ima-

gining there was nothing worth living for, that he kept constantly thinking he could bear it no longer, but would soon be obliged to make away with himself. The man of faith, on the other hand, is in possession of a joy that dwells in the very depths of his being, and is neither dissipated nor disturbed by the chances and changes of this mortal life. There are no storms at the bottom of the sea: on the surface the waves may mingle with the clouds; the waters may roar and be troubled, and the mountains shake with the swelling thereof; but *there* it is calm as on the stillest day in summer. So the man of faith may be happy amid external disasters—ay, too happy to do wrong.

That such communion with God is possible for men is neither more nor less than a fact of experience. No one has a right to say that the efficacy of faith is a delusion of half-crazy fanatics. Though it has *not* been experienced by some men, it *has* been experienced by others. From the days of the Psalmist until now there have always been men and women in the world who could exultingly declare, "The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth." The efficacy of faith has been attested by thou-

sands and tens of thousands of human beings, and among them some of the best and wisest and noblest of the race. On the other hand, the want of faith has been the ruin of many a man whose early life was full of brilliant promise. You remember those touching lines of Burns's,—

> "If I have wander'd in those paths
> Of life I ought to shun,
> As something, loudly in my breast,
> Remonstrates I have done;
>
> *Thou know'st* that Thou hast form'd me
> With passions wild and strong;
> And list'ning to their witching voice
> Has often led me wrong."

Poor Burns! hadst thou but learnt the secret of faith thou wouldst have found, that though thy passions were strong, there was a strength stronger than theirs, which could enable thee to regulate and subdue them. There have been men with passions as strong as thine, who have nevertheless become *saints;* of whom it was true, in a spiritual sense, that they "stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong."

Permit me to make one practical remark in conclusion—to draw your attention once more to the infinite distance that there is between faith

and mere belief. The profession of a creed may give us for a time an air of respectability or an odour of sanctity, but, alas for us! if our religion ends with mere belief. If our belief be good and our actions bad, all that our belief does for us is to enhance the enormity of our guilt. I have watched the sun, as he sank into his ocean bed, and paved the sea with a golden pathway that seemed to lead to the very gates of glory; and I have seen the golden hues gradually fading into gloom, till soon the blackest part of the whole horizon was that which but a few moments before had been so glorious and so bright. No less delusive is a spurious faith. Our belief in the divine Father's perfection is worthless—ay, it is even worse than worthless—unless it is changing us into the same image from glory to glory, and making us perfect even as He is perfect. If we have a genuine faith, we shall be willing to *agonise* (if need be) in the conflict with temptation, that so we may be in harmony with the God-ordered universe in which we have been placed, and eventually come to

> "That perfect presence of His face,
> Which we, for want of words, call heaven."

The Formation of Character.

III.

THE MAGNITUDE OF LITTLE SINS.

"Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines : for our vines have tender grapes."—SONG OF SOLOMON ii. 15.

WITH regard to the formation of character, we have already seen that the first great requisite is humility,—a profound sense that we have not already attained, neither are already perfect. We have further seen the necessity for faith, as a stimulus and inspiration in the struggle after perfection. In the present sermon I wish to direct your attention to a third point—viz., the importance of seeming trifles, or, in other words, the magnitude of little sins.

To despise little things is to show one's self utterly ignorant of the philosophy of life. There is a well-known anecdote told of Michael Angelo

which illustrates how a wise man respects what a foolish man despises. The story is so suggestive that I need scarcely ask pardon for telling it again. A friend called one day upon the sculptor and found him finishing a statue. Some time after, when he called again, Angelo was still engaged upon the same work. His friend, looking at the figure, said, "You have been idle since I saw you last." "By no means," replied Angelo, "I have retouched this part, and polished that; I have softened this feature and brought out this muscle; I have given more expression to this lip, and more energy to this limb." "Well, well," said his friend, "but all these are trifles." "It may be so," said the sculptor, "but recollect that trifles make perfection, and perfection is no trifle." It is equally true that trifles *mar* perfection;—

> "It is the little rift within the lute,
> That by and by will make the music mute."

The phrase "little sins," common though it be, is highly unscriptural and highly immoral. In the Bible you will frequently find such sins as lying, slander, and selfishness classed with sins like drunkenness, theft, or murder. The former are represented as equally effective with the latter in excluding from the kingdom of God.

Again, the expression "little sins" is an immoral and demoralising expression. You will find that the common distinction between great and little sins exactly coincides with the distinction between sins that are recognised and punished by law, and sins which are not so recognised and punished. Drunkenness, for example, would be a great sin, and gluttony a little sin. But the non-recognition of a sin by juridical law does not in the least diminish its magnitude. The laws ordained by society are necessarily very limited in their scope. They can take no such cognisance of evil as would involve, either great intrusion upon the privacy of domestic life, or great interference with the liberty of the individual. The end of social laws is to augment social happiness. If, therefore, they interfered too much, they would be self-destructive,—they would frustrate their own end. Suppose, for example, that society determined to compel every member of a family to do the *whole* of his duty to all the other members, in that case the emissaries of the law would have to be constantly present in every home, listening to all our words, and even scrutinising our very looks. Great though the mischief be which is caused in family life by unkind looks and ungenerous words, yet if the law were to step in and

endeavour to compel men into kindness and generosity, the remedy would be worse than the disease. So again, to take another illustration, a man may do much injury, directly to himself and indirectly to society, by taking too little exercise or too much sleep; but the law does not attempt to hinder him. And it is right in refraining. Within certain limits, it is better to be voluntarily ill than involuntarily well. Life would be intolerable if police regulations extended to all its minutest details. For these reasons the law of the land is often obliged to wink at wrong-doing, notwithstanding the fact of its causing an enormous amount of misery. Any attempt to lessen the misery would only produce still greater suffering of another kind. The non-interference, then, of society with any particular form of misconduct, does not prove that the wrong-doing is unimportant, but only that it is a kind of wrong-doing which cannot be dealt with by juridical law. Every sin, however, whether it be a violation of the laws of society or not, must be a violation of moral and divine law, or it would not be a sin; it must have been committed in opposition to the warning voice of conscience, or it would not be a sin; it must have been productive of injurious effects upon the character of the man who per-

formed it, or it would not be a sin; and when we know all this about it, to call it little is, in reality, to express the extremest contempt for morality. Moreover, the phrase "little sins" has a demoralising influence upon all thoughtless persons in whose presence it is used. They think to themselves, if the sin which doth so easily beset them be a little one, it is comparatively unimportant, scarcely worth the trouble of giving up. Whereas, on the contrary, it may actually be doing them and their neighbours more injury than was ever inflicted by any sin that would commonly be called great.

The sins of the tongue—the sins of evil speaking, rash speaking, unkind speaking, and so forth—are all, according to the common way of thinking, little sins. But listen to what St James says in regard to them: "The tongue is a little member. . . . Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts and of birds, and of serpents and of things in the sea, hath been tamed of mankind: but the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison."

He could not have said in more emphatic language that the sins of the tongue are among the greatest of sins. And his emphasis is perfectly just. "Little words," says Sophocles, "make or mar men." The words of scandal-mongers have blackened irretrievably many a fair reputation, destroyed ruthlessly many a valuable friendship, blasted for ever many an innocent life. Society may wink at such sins and call them little; the law may be unable to protect us from them, or to punish them; but an uncorrupted moral sense will always pronounce them great and grievous in the extreme.

It is curious to notice that the very characteristics which commonly earn for a sin the name of little, are often just the characteristics which in reality enhance its sinfulness, and render it pre-eminently worthy of being called great. For example, an ingenious prevarication would be usually considered far less sinful than a downright and awkward falsehood. It would be dignified with a euphemistic title, and called "a white lie." But the kernel of truth which it contains makes it *more* sinful, not less. It shows its perpetrator to be a *cultivated* liar. Judged, too, by its effects, it may often be discovered to be a lie of surpassing magnitude.

"A lie which is half a truth is ever the blackest of lies.
A lie which is all a lie may be met and fought with outright,
But a lie which is half a truth is a harder matter to fight."

A little sin, if there were such a thing, would be one that did little harm. But you will observe that the sins commonly called little are sins which can be, and which as a matter of fact are, constantly repeated. Hence, in the long-run, it is these sins that do the greatest amount of mischief. A man cannot commit many murders. He is generally hanged for the first, and there is an end of him. But the sins of temper and of speech and of heart, the sins of unkindness, of unneighbourliness, of selfishness, are sins which we can go on committing without fear of punishment, every day, every hour, every moment. Since, then, in the words of the Scotch proverb, "Many littles make a muckle," and since these little sins may be endlessly repeated, the amount of suffering which can be inflicted by them is practically infinite. Allow me to illustrate this point. In common parlance, theft is a great sin and bad temper is a little sin. But suppose that a member of your family, with whom you are compelled to live, is incessantly annoying, incessantly torturing you by his moroseness, by his

spitefulness, by his paroxysms of horrible rage, will you say that he is less of a sinner than a pickpocket? Will you say that one who has made your home a very hell is a more righteous person than another who has merely taken away your handkerchief? Why, the misery caused by all the pickpockets in the world to the whole human race, is less than that inflicted on your single self by the so-called little sins of your relative's detestable temper.

And the sins of which we are speaking not only cause a vast amount of suffering, but they have the most fatal effect upon character. A great sin, severely punished and bitterly repented of, is not at all likely to be repeated. Whatever crime it may have been that was committed by the author of 'Five Years' Penal Servitude,' any one who has read that book can see that its writer was in no danger of becoming a felon a second time. He evidently felt his punishment so acutely, that the remembrance of it would be practically omnipotent as a warning for the future. On the contrary, the sins which seem to be little, just for that very reason, and also because they are generally unpunished, are likely to be first of all ignored by a man, and then repeated, till at last their total effect may be to

render his character hopelessly and irretrievably bad. A number of very little sins will make a very great sinner.

"Sands make the mountain, moments make the year."

Again, our so-called little sins have the most fatal moral effect upon the characters of others. They are just the sins which others will be likely to imitate. The average man is more likely to be infected by such a sin as scandal than he is to be infected by such a sin as theft. Therefore these little sins do the most widespread moral mischief in society. They not only diminish our neighbour's happiness, but they injure his moral nature. And this deterioration of his character will have a similar tendency to deteriorate the character of others. Thus our neighbour's neighbours, persons whom we do not know and whom we cannot directly influence, may be morally injured, may be even morally ruined, by what we choose to consider our little sins.

From what I have said it must be sufficiently evident that if we desire to form for ourselves a perfect character, a studied avoidance of little sins is of the first importance. There is a wise maxim, current in common life, which tells us that if we take care of the pence the pounds will

take care of themselves. I think we may coin a moral maxim, containing not less wisdom, to the effect that if we take care of the little sins the great sins will take care of themselves. He who is economical with a penny is not very likely to be extravagant with a pound. Similarly, he who is conscientious about his words and his thoughts and the minor details of his life, is surely in a fair way to act conscientiously upon the most important and serious occasions. Whereas, a man who acts foolishly or wrongly in regard to what may seem trivial matters, is almost certain, from the mere force of habit, to act foolishly and wrongly in regard to the most momentous. Our habits depend upon the way in which we comport ourselves, not in great and startling emergencies, but rather under the simple, common circumstances of our common daily life. It is scarcely conceivable that circumstances could arise in which you or I should feel tempted to commit a murder. On the other hand, it is quite as difficult to imagine that a day could ever elapse without our being tempted to say something which it would have been better to leave unsaid. The oft-recurring circumstances of daily life bring with them oft-recurring opportunities to sin. The temptations may not at first be very

strong, but they are constantly present with us, and they are strengthened in proportion as we yield. A sin may *imperceptibly* become the predominant habit of a man's life. Before he is aware of it, it may become his second nature.

> "Ill habits gather by unseen degrees,
> As brooks make rivers, rivers run to seas."

A man would think twice before he deliberately made over his soul to the devil after the manner of Faust. But the bargain may be completed, though more slowly, yet quite as effectually, by a series of partial transfers.

To the thoughtful man there can be nothing little, least of all in the moral sphere. It was a favourite idea with Leibnitz that every particle of matter reflected in a manner, and carried latent in itself, the history of the entire universe; that is to say, if we knew all that could be known about any single particle, we should be omniscient. Everything influences, and is in turn influenced by, the infinite whole. From this point of view how unspeakably solemn appears our human life! Almost every moment brings with it at once an opportunity to do right and a temptation to do wrong. Everything we do or say leaves us somewhat different from our former

selves, and is productive of good or evil to numbers of our fellow-men. Every action we perform, every word we utter, every thought we think, has widespreading, far-reaching effects—effects that will eternally endure. Let us stand in awe and sin not.

The Formation of Character.

IV.

THE LAW OF HABIT.

"If thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door."—GENESIS iv. 7.

IF the angels weep, as they are said to do, over human follies and shortcomings, there can be nothing which more frequently elicits their tears than the ignorance and thoughtlessness of men in regard to the laws of their own nature. It is strange that they should know, and care to know, so little of the world they live in; that many of them should leave it without having made much more acquaintance with its laws than could be achieved by an unthinking brute. But it is still more strange that thousands should live and die in almost equal ignorance of themselves. The knowledge of human nature should

be the first business of education, but it is usually the last, if indeed it be not altogether ignored. And yet the old Delphic maxim, "Know thyself," was one of the wisest ever uttered. He who does not know himself will inevitably make a failure of his life. Just as the labour of a mechanic will be good, bad, or indifferent, according to his knowledge of the material upon which, and the instruments with which, he works, so the value of your life-work and mine will depend mainly upon the amount of attentive consideration which we have given to the laws of our own nature. For that nature is at once the material upon which we work — since all our actions change it for the better or the worse; and it is also the instrument with which we work — since the actions that change us originate from ourselves. Bacon, you remember, urged men to the study of the world *without*, on the ground that knowledge was power. Would that some moral philosopher would urge us, with the same earnestness and success, to the study of the world *within!* In both cases it is possible to turn the very same forces to a good or to a bad account. And the goodness or the badness of the use we make of them will depend very mainly upon the state of our knowledge. The more men know

about the laws of nature, the more advantage are they able to derive from them. Electricity, for example, by which our ancestors allowed themselves to be destroyed, we have now compelled into our service, and send it round the world at our bidding. So, too, there are laws in our personality which may be our salvation or our ruin. They may ruin us if we are ignorant; they will save us if we are wise.

Now of all these laws, there is perhaps none so important as the law of habit, according to which actions, by being often repeated, become, first of all, easier to be performed, and afterwards difficult, if not impossible, to be avoided. It is to this law of habit, I think, that the text refers, "If thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door." Sin is here personified, and represented as a beast of prey ready to spring upon its victim. Our actions have a tendency to enslave us. The wrong *deeds* which we once voluntarily chose to perform are very apt to grow into wrong *practices*, which we shall at last perform mechanically, without any choice, or even in opposition to the most earnest desire to refrain. So when a man sins he may fairly be represented, in the graphic language of the text, as having called something into existence which, like

an evil beast, is waiting to seize and devour him.

Every one has read of the terrible suffering De Quincey endured, when he was trying to give up the practice of eating opium. Every one has heard how Samuel Taylor Coleridge, when he found himself enslaved by the same habit, used to order his servant to follow him in his walks, and forcibly prevent him from entering an opium shop. We all know that men are constantly, as in the case of drunkards, ruined by the force of habit, when "their iniquities have taken hold of them, so that they are not able to look up." We have all known or heard of cases in which the grasp of habit became so deadly, that it crushed out of its wretched victim every trace of manhood or of womanhood, and what had once been a human being was left no better than a brute. No better? Ay, infinitely worse. For, to use the words of the prophet, it is "gold which has become dim," it is "most fine gold which has been changed." It is the image of God which has given place to the image of the devil.

But though we are all familiar with such illustrations as these of the law of habit, we do not sufficiently realise the wide scope of that law. We think that if we are not the slaves,

and are not likely to become the slaves, of any great vice or crime, the law of habit has comparatively little to do with us. Now we could not make a greater or more serious mistake. Paley truly says, "There are habits not only of drinking, swearing, lying, and so on, but of every modification of action, speech and thought. Man is a *bundle* of habits. There are habits of industry, attention, and vigilance; of obedience to the judgment, or of yielding to the first impulse of passion; of extending our views to the future, or of resting on the present; of indolence, dilatoriness, vanity, self-conceit, melancholy, partiality, fretfulness, suspicion, captiousness, censoriousness; of pride, ambition, covetousness; in a word, there is not a quality or function, either of body or mind, which does not feel the influence of this great law."

According to the law of habit, everything we begin to do is difficult, and in some degree painful; everything we have done often is easy, and in some degree pleasurable. So great is the irksomeness of making a commencement, that it may be truly said, when anything is begun it is in reality half done. If practice did not make things easier, life would be a most worthless possession. If, for example, the difficulty we

experienced in our infantile efforts to walk had continued, we should long ago have given up the effort at locomotion in disgust. But we are so constituted that the results of our actions, and even of our ancestors' actions, are embedded in our frame. Every thought, every feeling, every action is preceded, accompanied, and followed by changes in the nervous system; and these changes leave their marks behind them, in the form of a predisposition to similar experiences. When we first attempt any new kind of action, as, for example, playing upon a musical instrument, our muscles have to be schooled and disciplined to their unaccustomed task. But when they have got used to it, they work almost automatically; and eventually, just as if they had a will of their own, they seem to resent any attempt to change their mode of action. The Greek flute-player was a wise man, who demanded a double fee from any pupil who had been taught by a bad master; for, however hard it may be to learn anything, it is harder still to unlearn it. Again, what is true of the body is true of the mind. The presence in the mind of an idea or a train of ideas, predisposes it to a recurrence of the same or similar ideas. Each thought seems, so to speak, to make a road in the ner-

vous system, along which track similar thoughts can more easily travel. The same law holds, too, in regard to our customary manner of speaking, as well as in regard to our customary manner of thinking. Sir Joshua Reynolds once asked Dr Johnson by what means he had attained his extraordinary accuracy and flow of language. Johnson told him he had early laid it down as a fixed rule to do his best, on every occasion and in every company, to impart whatever he knew in the most forcible style; and that, as he never suffered any careless expressions to escape him, nor attempted to deliver his thoughts without arranging them in the clearest manner, correct speaking had become habitual to him.

Not only does habit make actions easier, but it also makes them, as I have already intimated, more or less agreeable. Custom is so powerful, that it can even transmute pain into pleasure. Let a man perform a disagreeable action often enough, and he will by and by experience a sort of enjoyment in its performance. Let him live long enough in the midst of unpleasant circumstances and surroundings, and they will at last acquire a strange and inexplicable fascination. The dullest, dirtiest, dreariest dungeon may in time become to him a home, which he could not

exchange for a palace without a sigh. You remember the words which Byron puts into the mouth of Bonnivard, the prisoner of Chillon, —

> "At last men came to set me free;
> I asked not why, and recked not where;
> It was at length the same to me,
> Fettered or fetterless to be;
> I learned to love despair.
> And thus, when they appeared at last,
> And all my bonds aside were cast,
> These heavy walls to me had grown
> A hermitage,—and all my own!
> And half I felt as they were come
> To tear me from a second home.
> With spiders I had friendship made,
> And watched them in their sullen trade.
> . . . . .
> My very chains and I grew friends,
> So much a long communion tends
> To make us what we are: even I
> Regained my freedom with a sigh."

Since, then, everything becomes easy, and more or less pleasant, by custom; and since our existence is made up, for the most part, of a number of little actions, which we do just because we have been accustomed to do them, it is manifest that the art of life is the art of forming habits. It must be admitted that men owe much, for good or for evil, to their ancestors. The scientific doctrine of heredity, no less than the theological doctrine of original sin, teaches us that *tendencies*

are inherited. Men owe much, too, for good or for evil, to their mothers,—God only knows how much. A mother has an almost infinite power of moulding her child's disposition during the first few years of its existence. But, of course, personal responsibility only begins with voluntary actions; and the most important voluntary actions are those which are done in youth. *Then* we sow the seed; in the years of our maturity we reap the harvest. "Live as long as you may," said Southey, "the first twenty years of your life is the longest half." It is by far the most pregnant in consequences, physical, intellectual, and moral.

To those of you who are as yet in the first flush of early youth, I say emphatically that "*now* is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation." You might now, with comparative ease, acquire such habits of right-doing, that by and by you would never feel any inclination to act differently. "He that is born of God," says St John, "sinneth not. He *cannot* sin, because he is born of God." Choose now the best mode of life, and custom will soon render it the most agreeable. Day by day and hour by hour, try to acquire habits of talking sensibly, acting kindly, and thinking wisely. This may need at first a

good deal of effort, but if you persevere it will by and by become your second nature; and then you may find it more difficult to do wrong than you have ever found it to do right. Euripides truly says, good habits are more to be relied on than good laws. A strong temptation will often cause a man to run the risk of punishment by violating a law; but temptation is powerless against the force of habit. And remember, that of the three things I have urged you to cultivate —talking sensibly, acting kindly, and thinking wisely—the last is quite as important as the other two. Your health, your happiness, your moral worth, will largely depend upon your thoughts, for these will mainly determine the quality of your words and acts. The tendency of a man's thoughts in the long-run, believe me, is to make him Christ-like or Satanic.

If, on self-examination, you find, as I am afraid you will find, that now and again you are guilty of thinking, speaking, or acting in a way which your better nature condemns, for God's sake determine to desist. These evil practices are the beginnings of evil habits. Destroy them while you can.

> "A little fire is quickly trodden out,
> Which, being suffered, rivers cannot quench."

If you do not eradicate these habits now, one of two things must inevitably happen: either you will go on from bad to worse, till your character, in the sight of God and in the sight of your own conscience, has become irretrievably bad; or if the end is to be better than that, you will have to endure nothing short of agony in the struggle to reform.

And if with any of you things have come to such a pass, that to root up your besetting sin *is* a work of agony, do it, notwithstanding the agony; do it, ere it be too late. There is this for your encouragement: the first effort will be the worst. No succeeding struggle will be half so hard. The law of habit applies not only to the adoption of new practices, but also to the discarding of old ones. Every time you struggle to be free, you have made your freedom easier to be obtained. Every temptation you conquer has diminished the force of the next. Every time you refrain from an evil practice, you have made each succeeding abstinence less difficult. When the queen says to Hamlet—

> "O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain!"

he replies—

> "O throw away the worser part of it
> And live the purer with the other half.

. . . . . Refrain to-night,
And that will lend a kind of easiness
To the next abstinence; the next more easy:
For youth almost can change the stamp of nature,
And either curb the devil, or throw him out
With wondrous potency."

By one of those curious contradictions that we sometimes meet with in philology, the word habit is applied at once to a vestment, which may be easily at a moment's notice removed, and also to customary conduct, which may take such a hold upon us that to give it up seems like parting with our very life. "He that committeth sin is the servant of sin." Bad practices may now be sitting loosely upon us, so to speak, like a garment; we might lay them aside with comparative ease. But if we do not interfere, they will go on tightening their grasp, till at last it will become impossible to wrench ourselves free. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? *then* may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." Alas! alas! for the man—

"That all in later, sadder age begins
To war against ill uses of a life;
But these from all his life arise, and cry—
'Thou hast made us lords, and canst not put us down!'"

"Custom," says St Augustine,—"custom unre-

sisted hardens into necessity;" and then it is too late to repent. Then even agonising efforts may end only in failure and despair. "If thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door." Beware! Beware!

The Formation of Character.

V.

RETRIBUTION.

"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."
GALATIANS vi. 7.

JUST as it is impossible, in the physical world, to gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles, so is it impossible in the moral world to reap, in the end and in the long-run, anything but reward for the good which we do, anything but punishment for the evil. This assertion is demonstrably, I had almost said undeniably, true. But there have always been moralists, from the Sophists of Greece to Professor Bain among ourselves, who have asserted that the only punishment to be feared by wrongdoers was that which could be inflicted from without,—fines, imprisonment, social ignominy, and so forth. If this were really

so, if there were no other form in which retribution could come, our text would not be universally valid. Its truth in any particular case would depend upon whether the wrongdoer could, or could not, escape detection. If he could, it might be possible to sow one thing and reap another, to sow evil and to reap good. It not unfrequently happens, indeed, that a man who is dishonest, by managing to appear honest, reaps the external rewards of honesty. But nevertheless, it is true of him that "Whatsoever he has sown, *that* shall he also reap," ay, *that* he has already begun to reap. There is a harvest of *character* that follows from human actions, and this is at once the most important and the most certain form of retribution.

Some of you will remember having read an interesting discussion on this subject in Plato's 'Republic.' Thrasymachus, one of the Sophists, undertakes to prove that the wicked, if only they are wicked on a large enough scale, are always gainers by their wickedness. If, for example, an honest and a dishonest man are partners in any business undertaking, the dishonest man overreaches the honest man, and so gets the best of the bargain. In the case of the income-tax, an untruthful person will pay less than the man

who gives an accurate return. In an official situation, again, he who is conscientious will neglect his own affairs for the sake of the general good, instead of enriching himself from the public purse, as he might have done if he had not been troubled with a conscience. To be bad on a small scale, says Thrasymachus, procures for men the names of burglar, swindler, thief, &c.; but to be bad on a large scale, like a tyrant usurper for instance, who has forced his way to a throne through rivers of blood, and has then sacrificed without stint the happiness and the lives of his subjects for his own private enjoyment,—to be wicked on a magnificent scale like that, is the way to procure for one's self all that heart can wish.

It must be admitted, I think, that if there were no retribution to be feared by us except that which society inflicts, there would be considerable force in the position which is here taken up by Thrasymachus. Much of what he says is as true to-day in England as it was formerly in Greece. The man who steals a turnip is called a thief and sent to prison. Whereas, on the other hand—and those of you who know anything of the history of public companies will bear me out in what I say—

many a man, who has amassed a fortune by ingenious swindling, has been allowed to pass muster as a gentleman.

Another speaker in the same dialogue, named Glaucon, supports a somewhat different position. He argues, that generally speaking it is impossible to commit injustice with impunity, either on a large scale or on a small scale. He admits that if it were possible to injure our neighbours without any fear of civil punishment, it would be the best thing we could do; but, he says, as men cannot count on acting injuriously to others without running the risk of being injured by them in return, they have wisely agreed among themselves that they will mutually refrain. So virtue is the result of a compromise between the *best* mode of life, which would be to do injustice to others without suffering it from them in return, and the *worst*, which is to suffer injustice without the power of retaliation. He goes on to assert, what I hope for the sake of humanity is not true, that if the virtuous and the vicious had entire liberty given them to do what they liked, they would both go the same way,—they would both become unjust. Supposing that each had a Gyges' ring, by which he could become invisible when he pleased, the actions of both would be

identical. Glaucon further maintains that the *appearance* of virtue is alone necessary to secure happiness; because if a man *seems* to be virtuous, he will obtain for himself the rewards of society and the smiles of his fellow-men, quite as much as if he were really what he seemed. Hence if it were generally possible for a man to *appear* virtuous and to *be* vicious, that should be the object of our endeavours; for we should then reap a twofold advantage,—we should obtain the rewards, without the punishments, of vice, and we should also receive the rewards of virtue; we should enjoy the pleasures of sin without its pains, and we should also share the favours which society is in the habit of bestowing upon honest and honourable men. Still, as a rule, Glaucon says, if a man has only the appearance of virtue, the chances of exposure are great, and therefore honesty is on the whole the best policy. It is a sacrifice of one's own interest, but it is one which pays.

Here Socrates takes up the discussion. He proceeds to argue that virtue is desirable not only for its extrinsic, but also for its intrinsic, rewards; not only because it procures for us the goodwill and kindly offices of our fellow-men, but also, and chiefly, because of what it is in

itself. Virtue, says Socrates, is the wellbeing of the soul, and therefore it is its own reward. The virtuous soul is as superior to the vicious, as a well-ordered and well-governed state is superior to a country which is embroiled in civil war. The heart of the vicious man is necessarily more or less filled, even in prosperity, with tumult and discord; while the heart of the virtuous man is tranquil, content, and happy even in the direst adversity.

In the Dialogue called 'Gorgias,' Plato takes a somewhat similar view. He there compares the virtuous to the *healthy* man. Just as a man afflicted with some excruciating and loathsome disease is to be pitied, even though he be a millionaire, so a man whose soul is impure is in an unenviable state, however magnificent may be his possessions and surroundings. His evil deeds may have procured for him, so far as appearances are concerned, only wealth and fame and power; but if, during the process, his soul has contracted an incurable disease, he is after all the most miserable of men. What shall it profit a man, Plato asks in effect, if he gain the whole world and yet lose himself?

Now the views of Thrasymachus and Glaucon, which Socrates and Plato controverted, are held

at the present time in a somewhat less extreme form, not only by thinkers, but also by a great many persons who never think.

When men have escaped the detection and punishment of society, they fancy they have got off altogether scot-free. The professional thief, who has been successful in a robbery, imagines that, as he has balked the police, he is at liberty to offer himself unqualified congratulations. The person who has said something that is not strictly true in order to shield himself from blame, knows that if he is detected he will fall in the esteem of his fellow-men; but if he is not detected, he flatters himself that all is right, that he need not trouble himself any further; that, though it would not be safe to try the experiment too often, yet for this once he has sown without having reaped, or rather has sown evil and reaped only good. And all of us are too much in the habit of thinking, in regard to actions which lie on the border-land between the good and the bad, that it really does not matter whether we do them or not, since in neither case does there seem much prospect of reaping either punishment or reward. For instance, we decide on amusing ourselves when, perhaps, we ought to be at work. The work may not promise any immediate remun-

eration, and the amusement seems self-evidently desirable. So we imagine that, in choosing the latter, we must be acting wisely, or at any rate that we are doing ourselves no harm.

Now, in reasoning thus, we are guilty of two mistakes. In the first place, we assume that if retribution does not come at once, it will not come at all. We might as well argue, because the harvest does not come in the spring-time, that therefore it will not come in the autumn. "Crime and punishment," says Emerson, "grow out of one stem. Punishment is the fruit that, unsuspected, ripens within the flower of the [sinful] pleasure that conceals it. The retribution is inseparable from the thing, though it is often spread over a long time, and so does not become distinct for many years."

In the second place, we assume that pain is the only form of retribution. It is true that in the long-run, and as a rule, we do reap a harvest of pleasure or of pain, according to the moral goodness or badness of the actions we have sown. "In the weary satiety of the idle," says Mr Greg, "in the healthy energy of honest labour, in the irritable temper of the selfish, in the serene peace of the benevolent, in the startling tortures of the soul where the passions have the mastery, in the

calm Elysium which succeeds their subjugation, may be traced materials of retribution sufficient to satisfy the severest justice." But even when punishment for evil deeds does not take the form of actual pain, it by no means follows that those deeds have been committed with impunity. The retribution may have come as deterioration of character. This deterioration is the worst conceivable punishment; though it often exercises on men a benumbing, stupefying influence, and makes them insensible to the pain they would have felt had they lived a nobler life.

However fond we may be of pleasure, there are few of us, I suppose, who care for nothing else. We would not be always children, even if the pleasures of children were greater, as they possibly may be, than any that can be experienced in maturer years. It is better to be a man than an ape, even though the ape may have more pleasure and less pain in his life than the man. And surely it is better for a human being to act in a way which will develop a noble character, though he may thereby lose pleasure, not only at the time but even in the long-run. As Mrs Barbauld quaintly puts it: "Is it not some reproach on the economy of Providence that such an one, who is a mean dirty fellow,

should have amassed wealth enough to buy half a nation? Not in the least. He made himself a mean dirty fellow for that very end. He has paid his health, his conscience, his liberty for it; and will you envy him the bargain?" Even granting the extreme supposition, which I do not think at all likely to be true,—but granting, for argument's sake, that such a man had *more pleasure* in his life than you who are striving honestly to do your duty, would you change places with him? I know you would not. The good seed you have sown, in the shape of these conscientious endeavours, has resulted in the harvest of an honourable character; and that is a possession beyond all price, cheaply purchased, if need be, by a long-protracted agony of pain.

Let us learn, then, to look at our actions, ay, even at our words and thoughts, from this point of view. The safest criterion of their quality is, not what effect will they have in winning for us the smiles of our fellow-men, nor how far will they procure for us pleasure or pain, but what will be their influence upon our character? If an action tends to make us wiser, stronger, nobler, more sympathetic, more unselfish — in

one word, better than we were before, then (even though it may involve pain and odium) it is pre-eminently right and desirable and good, both for ourselves and for the world, both as regards the present and the future, both for this life and that which is to come. Yes; even for that which is to come. "We brought nothing into the world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out," — nothing except character. That is a man's greatest blessing or greatest curse, as the case may be, in the present state of existence, and it is the only thing which he can take with him into the next. There will be a time when our bodies must mingle with the dust. There will be a time when this earth, which seems so solid and so permanent, will come to an end. But character can never die: it is immortal as God Himself. The things which are seen, on which we lavish so much love, are temporal. Character, which is not seen, and which we too often lamentably neglect, is eternal. *They* shall perish, but character remaineth; they all shall wax old, as doth a garment, and as a vesture they shall be folded up and set aside, but character will endure as long as eternity shall last. We must take up our life in the next

world where we leave it off in the present. Let us see to it, then, that we do not enter into the great Hereafter with a mean, sordid, despicable character. Let us see to it that our thoughts and words and deeds are such as will tend to the development of a character noble and divine.

The Connection between Self-denial and Self-development.

I.

THE USE OF THE WORLD.

"The Son of Man came eating and drinking."—MATT. xi. 19.

ALL the moral disciplines that the world has seen have used the instrument of self-denial. But Christ's view of it is in many respects peculiar and unique. My purpose in this sermon is to show that Christian self-sacrifice is not asceticism.

A college friend of mine has told me that when he was about seventeen years of age, he became for a while, owing to the loss of his mother, a prey to morbid melancholy. In this condition it was a maxim with him that everything pleasant ought to be avoided, and he tried

hard to act up to his conviction. At meal-times he would always take what he liked least; and if there were anything on the table he particularly disliked, he would restrict himself entirely to that. He only allowed himself one enjoyment, and that was watching the sunsets, which in his part of the country were often remarkably fine. But the pleasure he derived from this was so great, that he by and by came to the conclusion he ought to give it up. His life was to be in future, he resolved, one of never-ceasing unpleasantness.

Now this idea of the essential badness of pleasure, which had so strong an influence over my friend during his morbid state of mind, has been very commonly held and advocated by the propounders of ethical and religious systems. Diogenes, you remember, and the Cynics he attracted to his tub, discarded all the comforts of life, with the single exception of clothing. The Gymnosophists dispensed with that last relic of civilisation, and looked upon the luxury of raiment as a culpable self-indulgence. Even Plato sometimes supports the doctrine that pain is essentially preferable to pleasure. In the 'Phædo' he represents human life as the imprisonment of the soul in the body, the soul being punished in this way

for sins committed in a pre-existent state. Every pleasure enjoyed, he says, is as a nail fastening the soul more securely in its dungeon; every pleasure given up is a nail withdrawn, and hastens on the period of its release. The religions of the Hindus and the Buddhists aim at the gradual suppression of the body and the entire eradication of desire. Hinduism endeavours to attain this result chiefly by means of penance; Buddhism by means of reflection. Hinduism advocates the surrender of the good things of this life, because they are in themselves bad. Buddhism advocates the same sacrifice, because, though in themselves indifferent, they are likely to prolong our love of life, which it regards as the root of all evil.

Like many other views which find no warrant in the Christianity of Christ, it has had a considerable influence upon the Christianity of Christendom. The pillar saints, for example, stood for years on the top of lofty columns, till they became a mass of corruption too loathsome to be described. They were firmly convinced that if heaven were to be attained by them, it could only be won through agony. The words which the poet-laureate puts into the mouth of Stylites express the feelings of an ascetic with

much force and pathos, and are, it seems to me, a *reductio ad absurdum* of asceticism. Let us listen for a moment to the poor saint's prayer:—

"I will not cease to grasp the hope I hold
Of saintdom, and to clamour, mourn, and sob,
Battering the gates of heaven with storms of prayer,
Have mercy, Lord, and take away my sin.
Let this avail, just, dreadful, mighty God,
This not be all in vain, that thrice ten years,
Thrice multiplied by superhuman pangs,
In hungers and in thirsts, fevers and colds,
In coughs, aches, stitches, ulcerous throes and cramps,
A sign betwixt the meadow and the cloud,
Patient on this tall pillar I have borne
Rain, wind, frost, heat, hail, damp, and sleet, and snow.
. . . . . .
Thou knowest I bore this better at the first,
For I was strong and hale of body then.
. . . . . .
Now am I feeble grown; my end draws nigh;
I hope my end draws nigh; half deaf I am,
So that I scarce can hear the people hum
About the column's base, and almost blind,
And scarce can recognise the fields I know.
. . . . . .
Yet cease I not to clamour and to cry,—
. . . . . .
Have mercy, mercy: take away my sin.
O Jesus! if thou wilt not save my soul,
Who may be saved? who is it may be saved?
Who may be made a saint, if I fail here?
Show me the man hath suffer'd more than I,
For did not all thy martyrs die *one* death?

. . . But I die here
To-day, and whole years long, a life of death.

. . . . . .

I, 'tween the spring and downfall of the light,
Bow down one thousand and two hundred times
To Christ, the Virgin Mother, and the Saints ;
Or in the night, after a little sleep,
I wake : the chill stars sparkle ; I am wet
With drenching dews, or stiff with crackling frost.
I wear an undress'd goatskin on my back,
A grazing iron collar grinds my neck ;
And in my weak, lean arms I lift the cross,
And strive and wrestle with thee till I die :
O mercy, mercy ! wash away my sin."

Now if pleasure were essentially sinful, then Stylites was the wisest of men. If heaven be worth winning, and if it can only be won by agony, then the more agony we cause ourselves to bear, the surer we shall be of an eternal reward. But the majority of ascetics are far less consistent. They believe that they can best please God by painful penances and wearisome pilgrimages, by bodily flagellations and mortifications, by fasting till they are almost starved, and keeping vigils till they are nearly mad, by depriving themselves of what is agreeable, by choosing what is disgusting, by refraining from worldly pursuits and amusements, by attempting to eradicate every natural instinct—by acting, in short, as if pain were the chief end of life. That is

their creed. But, unlike Stylites, they do not act up to it. They try to make a compromise between their inclinations and beliefs. They endeavour to intersperse enjoyment with their sufferings, in the hope that the former may be sufficiently atoned for by the latter. This half-hearted policy seems to me most irrational. The man who deliberately and systematically chooses what is unpleasant may be acting a wise and prudent part; but the ordinary semi-ascetic, though he makes himself very miserable, will possibly have too much pleasure after all to pass muster with his god of pain. He loses this world to a very considerable extent, and by no means makes sure of the next.

Asceticism in its extreme form, in which it is synonymous with the worship of pain, will scarcely bear a moment's examination. The supposition that God takes delight in agony is the foulest of all conceivable blasphemies. The Being who could make his creatures exquisitely sensitive, place them in a world teeming with sources of enjoyment, and then require them to act continuously in violation of their nature by making pain the chief end of their existence—the Being who was capable of such a refinement of cruelty, instead of deserving to

be worshipped as a god, ought to be execrated as the very prince of fiends.

Pain, so far from being that in which the Author of the universe takes delight, is very frequently a clear sign that His laws have been disobeyed. It is the great criterion of evil. One of the most convincing arguments against crime is, that it causes misery and must therefore be out of harmony with man's nature and with God's. If we take a comprehensive view of a bad man's life, the proof that he has done wrong will frequently be found in the fact, not that he has had too much pleasure, but that he has had (upon the whole) too little,—his pleasure having been purchased by too prodigal an expenditure of suffering.

Asceticism, however, often takes (especially in Christendom) a somewhat different form. Pleasure and pain are regarded as neither good nor bad in themselves; but it is said that the choice of pain and the rejection of pleasure are the means we should employ to disgust ourselves with the present world, and to get our affections fixed entirely on another. Many persons seem to think that they ought by rights to care for nothing but heaven. They seem to think, as they lavish their affections upon those who are

dear to them, that God is watching them with an angry, greedy jealousy, and will never be satisfied till He has concentrated the whole wealth of their love upon Himself.

Now, I want to point out that this is not the kind of self-denial which Christ requires from us. Serious and earnest as the Saviour was, no one can say that He was a harsh or gloomy ascetic. Think of Him at the marriage festival. Think of His friendly visits to the family at Bethany. Think of Him at the great feast in Levi's house. Call to mind how He commended the poor woman who anointed His feet with ointment, and censured the host for neglecting to perform the customary social courtesies. Think of His final interview with the disciples on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias, when He accosted them with the words, "Children, have ye any meat?" and then, leading the way to a fire, "with fish laid thereon and bread," said to them, "Come and dine." When asked, "Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast oft, but Thy disciples fast not?" Christ gave the significant reply, "Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast." That is

to say, There will come to them pain enough by and by after I am gone, which must be accepted in the way of duty: it is needless to endure it for its own sake. Think of these and similar instances in that short public life of three years, and you will discover what a bright, sunny, genial nature the Saviour had. You will perceive that He never refused anything agreeable, except when it would have hindered Him in the accomplishment of His Father's work.

The idea that genuine discipleship is incompatible with a cultured, beautiful, and happy life (which grew probably, in the first instance, out of that belief in the essential baseness of pleasure which we have seen to be so common), has been strengthened and perpetuated by a misinterpretation of two different kinds of texts. The first are those in which the Saviour uses what may be called vehement hyperbole. For example, "If any man hate not his father and his mother, he cannot be my disciple." If we look below the surface of the words, we see that His meaning is, as He Himself is elsewhere declared to have put it, "He that loveth father or mother *more than* me, is not worthy of me." He did not intend that the family affections should be ignored or depreciated; they were not to be set aside, un-

less they clashed with duty. But when a man could not be loyal to an earthly love without being disloyal to Christ, then the natural affection must be suppressed—then, and *then alone*.

Again, there is another set of passages in which Christ's meaning has been misunderstood, because it has not been sufficiently borne in mind that He is referring, not to disciples generally, but only to disciples under certain special circumstances. For example, when He sends away the twelve to preach, He tells them to provide neither gold nor silver in their purses, to take no scrip for their journey, nor even two coats. It was necessary to remind the apostles, as it is still necessary to remind those who are about to engage in any great and dangerous achievement, that they must be prepared to subdue and set at nought all interfering interests and feelings. The words of Christ I have just quoted are still almost literally applicable to the missionaries of the Cross. They must, if they are to be successful, relinquish the comforts, the enjoyments, the attractions, and the prospects of life. Much of the language of the apostles is to be explained in a similar way. They were always within sight of death; and the world therefore was necessarily a very different place to them from what it may legitimately be

to us. "In the present day," says Mr Greg, "the profession of Christianity is attended with no peril; its practice even demands no sacrifice, save that preference of duty to enjoyment, which is the first law of cultivated humanity. Hence for us to repeat the language and profess the feelings of men who lived in daily dread of an awful martyrdom, is neither more nor less than the enactment of a gigantic lie." To assert that we regard the world as a howling wilderness, yet to be scrupulously careful in plucking such of its flowers as attract us; to assert that the sole duty of life is to prepare for heaven, and yet to spend most of our waking moments in promoting our earthly comfort; to vociferate that we believe *one* thing, when by the continual practice of our lives we show that we believe *another*,—to do this is to be, not religious, but dishonest.

And all for what? for the sake of appearing to manifest a quality which Christ never desired His followers to possess. "I pray not," said our Lord, "that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil." The world we are not to love is the world that lieth in wickedness. To love it, so far as it is not wicked, is to love it as "the garden on which the Creator has lavished mir-

acles of beauty, as the habitation of humanity, the arena of its conflicts, the scene of its illimitable progress, the dwelling-place of the wise, the good, the active, the loving, and the dear." Such an affection for it is no ignoble love.

The life of earth is doubtless inferior to the life of heaven, as the studies and games of a schoolboy are inferior to the pursuits that await him when he reaches manhood. But, just as the boy best prepares for his future by valuing and improving all the varied advantages of his preliminary career, so we shall best fit ourselves for the great hereafter, not by despising, but by duly appreciating the work and the joy of earth. Christ never bids us give up anything that is good, unless it would keep us from something that is better. "The Son of man came eating and drinking." Ay, the very Man of Sorrows refused to join in the irrational worship of pain.

The Connection between Self-denial and Self-development.

II.

THE ABUSE OF THE WORLD.

"Man shall not live by bread alone."—MATTHEW iv. 4.

THERE are two opposite mistakes, as it seems to me, regarding pleasure, into which men frequently fall. Some look upon it as ignoble and degrading, and believe that the invariable rejection of it is the only proof of wisdom. Others think that it is the sole end of life, and that there is nothing which can ever be legitimately valued higher. In the previous sermon we noticed the first of these views, and we saw, I think, that it was not the doctrine of Christ. "The Son of man came eating and drinking." We saw that our great Exemplar never

avoided what was agreeable, merely because it was pleasant, and that He did not require His disciples to eradicate the sensuous elements of their being. In the present discourse I want to direct your attention to the other side of the subject,—to the fact that "man shall not live by bread alone." Our sensuous nature is not the whole of our being; it is but a part, but the lowest part. Pleasure is but one element, and that a comparatively unimportant element, in our complex human life. For complete self-development it is necessary that we regard our nature as a whole, and estimate its various elements at their proper worth.

> "What is a man,
> If the chief good and market of his time
> Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more."

A beast can be satisfied with a succession of momentary pleasures. Its life is identical with, and lost in, its passing experiences. It has no self-consciousness which survives them, and which can think of itself apart from them. Hence for the animal rest and peace are within easy reach. A man, on the other hand, knows that he is more than his desires and passions, that there is something in him which underlies and remains beyond all isolated enjoyments, — something

which no amount of sensuous gratification can ever satisfy or fulfil. He is "a being of a large discourse, looking before and after." He is obliged to bring his varied experiences together, and regard them as making up a continuous history; and this history he is constrained to compare with an ideal history, presented to him by reason and conscience,—an ideal history of what he ought to be. Hence rest and peace seem for ever to elude man's grasp. "Our very wishes," we are constantly compelled to say, "give us not our wish." But this wretchedness is a most striking proof of greatness. The higher elements in our nature are the cause of a divine discontent. There is a contradiction, a rivalry, an antagonism, between the nobler and the less noble elements of our being; and unless this contradiction be satisfactorily solved, unless this rivalry and antagonism be put an end to, we shall be harassed by the painful consciousness that our life is a deplorable failure.

Some have tried, as we have already seen, to bring the conflict to a conclusion by getting rid altogether of the lower elements: they have attempted to eradicate desire, to extinguish instinct, to suppress and annihilate the bodily nature. This mistake, as Principal Caird says,

is not unnatural. "If the spiritual self is essentially greater than the lower tendencies, why should it not exist without them? If desire and passion drag me down from my ideal life, why should I not escape from their thraldom," and live as if I were a disembodied spirit? "Snap the ties that bind me to the satisfactions of the moment, that absorb me in the transient and perishable, and will not my spirit gain at a bound its proper sphere? But the ties cannot be snapped, and even if they could, the end proposed would not be gained. The violent self-diremption at which the ascetic aims can never be effected; and if it could, it would be, not the fulfilment, but the extinction of a moral life. In our self-development the lower natural tendencies have an indispensable part to play. Apart from them, the realisation of our ideal nature would be utterly impossible." To live the best human life is to live, not without desires and enjoyments, but with duly regulated desires and enjoyments; it is to live, not out of the world, away from all temptations, but *in* the world, with its snares and pitfalls, avoiding its evil and choosing its good. Even if it were possible for a man to escape temptation by living the life of a hermit, he would not in that way

achieve self-conquest, any more than a soldier could vanquish the enemy by flight. Even if it were possible for a man to eliminate the lower elements of his nature, he would not in that way make the other elements more perfect, any more than he could improve one-half of his body by cutting off the other half.

Some, however, with whom we are at present more specially concerned, have attempted to eliminate, not the lower elements of their being, but the higher. The sensualist tries to live in forgetfulness of the fact that he is a rational, moral, and spiritual being. Now, manifestly, it must lead to the most disastrous results, when the lower elements of a man's nature are treated as if they were the only, or at any rate the most important, elements. The soul of the sensualist is like a State in which the ignorant, vulgar and stupid mob has usurped the reins of government, and is proceeding to destroy everything better than itself. Enjoyment, which is the proper satisfaction for the sensuous part of our being, is no satisfaction at all for the mind and heart and spirit. The unsatisfactoriness of a life devoted to pleasure may be proved not only by abstract considerations, but by the fact that those who have lived in this fashion

invariably speak of their existence with disappointment and disgust. Take, for example, the testimony of Lord Chesterfield and Lord Byron. No men ever had better opportunities for extracting from the present life all the pleasure it was capable of affording. They availed themselves of their opportunities to the full, and what was the result? "I have seen the silly rounds of business and pleasure," said Lord Chesterfield, "and have done with them all. I have enjoyed all the pleasures of the world and consequently know their futility, and do not regret their loss. Their real value is very, very low; but those who have not experienced them always overrate them. For myself, I by no means desire to repeat the nauseous dose." Listen again to Byron's estimate of his own life, as you have it in one of the Hebrew melodies:—

"Fame, wisdom, love, and power were mine,
And health and youth possessed me;
My goblets blushed from every vine,
And lovely forms caressed me:
I sunned my heart in beauty's eyes,
And felt my soul grow tender;
All earth can give, or mortal prize,
Was mine of regal splendour.

I strive to number o'er what days
Remembrance can discover,
Which all that life or earth displays
Would lure me to live over.

There rose no day, there rolled no hour
  Of pleasure unembittered;
And not a trapping decked my power
  That galled not while it glittered.

The serpent of the field, by art
  And spells, is won from harming;
But that which coils around the heart,
  Oh! who hath power of charming?
It will not list to wisdom's lore,
  Nor music's voice can lure it;
But there it stings for evermore
  The soul that must endure it."

Since man has a complex nature, his life must inevitably be a failure, in so far as he neglects to bring that nature *in its entirety* to the greatest possible perfection. For this it is necessary that the lower principles be guided and controlled by the higher. Neither the narrow desires of sense, nor the wider and more comprehensive desires, such as love of wealth or power, are to be eradicated; but their original character of independence is to be changed. In the well-regulated life these desires are moralised, rationalised, and ennobled by being made to contribute not merely to the gratification of the moment, but to the permanent, enduring ends of the spirit. "The spiritual nature cannot be severed from the carnal, any more than the plant can be separated from the common earth out of which its grows; but it trans-

figures the carnal with its own essence, as truly as the life of the plant transmutes into fruit and flower the grossness and foulness of the soil."

Let me illustrate this. The ascetic fasts when he ought to eat, because he fancies that the more pain he can manage to endure, the more he will honour God. But the discomfort and ill-health he causes himself do not assist him either to work or to worship. They greatly hinder and hamper him. The sensualist, on the contrary, eats when he ought to fast, from the mistaken idea that there is nothing worth living for but pleasure. Consequently both his health and his appetite are injured. So that even from his own point of view he is extremely foolish: he would have had more pleasure if he had not striven for so much. But the man who is seeking to develop his whole nature imitates neither the sensualist nor the ascetic: he follows Franklin's advice, and "eats so much as is necessary for bodily health, considered with reference to the employment of the mind." This, no doubt, for most of us, involves a certain amount of fasting; and therefore our Church, though expressly discountenancing the doctrine of penance, has wisely taught us to pray for grace "to use such abstinence that our flesh may be subdued to the spirit." We should always

remember that the mind and the spirit need all the help which the body can give them, and that there is nothing more helpful than perfect health.

Complete self-development thus requires that we regard our nature as a whole—estimating at their proper value all its various elements, and using them according to their respective characters of subordination and supremacy.

But, further, complete self-development requires that we remember the next life as well as the present. I pointed out in the last sermon that it was a mistake to live as if there were no life but the future, and no world but heaven. Now, I must remark that it is a yet more grievous blunder to live as if there were no life but the present, and no world but earth. To recur to our old illustration,—though the schoolboy best prepares for his after-career by appreciating and making the most of his educational advantages, yet it is of the utmost importance that he should regard his school life as a preparation for the pursuits of manhood. Otherwise he will be too anxious to gain prizes, and so sacrifice his health; or too eager to excel in sports, and so neglect his studies. In either case, when he comes out into the world he will find himself at a terrible disadvantage, owing to his

previous want of forethought. Similarly, it is imperative on us all to remember that the "grave is not our goal," and that our life on earth is but an elementary stage in our existence. "The contemplation of the future," says Mr Greg, "will let in much light upon the present, and have a considerable effect in the development of the higher portions of our nature. Without this reflection upon the future, though a man may be perfectly upright and even philanthropic, he will go out of the world with many depths of his being altogether unsounded, with many of the loftiest portions of his character still latent and unimproved; and when he passes through the portals of the grave and reaches the new existence, he will enter it a wholly unprepared and astonished stranger."

When the lower elements of our being come to be regarded as instruments of the higher, when, moreover, we take into account the fact that we are to live for ever, then we begin to see that pleasure and pain are of far less importance than we had formerly been accustomed to think. For one thing, they are very evanescent.

> "Pleasures are like poppies spread,
> You seize the flower, its bloom is shed;
> Or like the snow-fall in the river,
> A moment white—then melts for ever."

So, too, with pain. It is hard to bear while it lasts, but when it is over we remember no more the anguish. That pleasure and pain are comparatively superficial elements in human life may be seen from the fact, that the very same circumstances which give pleasure to one man will often give pain to another. To a considerable extent we may teach ourselves to feel pleasure at what once caused us pain, and to feel pain at what once caused us pleasure. It has been well said, that "if we choose the mode of life which is most commendable, habit will in time render it the most agreeable." The actual value of a pleasure or pain can only be estimated by its effect upon a man's life regarded as a whole. Other things being equal, a wise man will always choose pleasure in preference to pain; but the wise man knows that very frequently other things are not equal. Pleasure may be the cause of disgrace, remorse, self-contempt, and anguish. On the other hand, pain may tend to the perfecting of character,—may lead eventually to a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. By the thoughtful man, therefore, pleasure and pain are regarded not simply nor chiefly according to their inherent qualities of comfort or of discomfort; he looks rather to the conditions out of which they spring,

and to the consequences by which they will be followed. Our real life is something far other and deeper than its fleeting pleasures and pains—something infinitely more sacred and sublime.

In a word, though there is not required from us any irrational rejection of pleasure, there is required from us the reasoning and reasonable rejection of it, where it would be incompatible with our complete, all-round development. Though there is not required from us any hypocritical profession of contempt for the world in which we live, there is required from us serious reflection upon the fact that we carry latent within us "the power of an endless life." Though we should not ignore, nor attempt to destroy, the lower elements of our nature, we should, and, if we would be perfect, we *must* subdue them, and press them into the service of the spirit.

> "Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
> Is our destined end and way;
> But *to act*, that each to-morrow
> Find us *further* than to-day"—

further upon that path, around which "the light shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

The Connection between Self-denial and Self-development.

III.

THE PARTIAL AND THE PERFECT SELF.

"He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."—MATTHEW x. 39.

IN the last sermon we saw that self-denial was necessary to self-development. The tendency with a sensuous being is always to obtain immediate pleasure. But if we would be perfect, it is often necessary to sacrifice the pleasure of the moment, for the sake of greater and more enduring pleasure later on; and, further, it is necessary to sacrifice pleasure, not merely at the moment but even in the long-run, for the sake of those parts of our nature which are higher than the sensuous. This kind of self-denial, however, though necessary and important as far as

it goes, does not go very far. If a man denies himself merely *for* himself, irrespective of any consideration for others, his self-denial is after all only a refined form of selfishness. Rochefoucauld's cynical definitions of friendship and of liberality, though not universally true, cannot be said to be universally false. He speaks, you remember, of friendship as a mere traffic, wherein self-love always proposes to be the gainer. Of liberality, he says that it is seldom more than the vanity of giving, and that we are fonder of the vanity than the generosity of the action. It cannot be doubted that we have in these bitter sentences a correct analysis, though not, thank God! of all friendship and generosity, yet of a good deal that frequently passes current as such. Love itself, or rather something simulating the name of love, may only be selfishness in disguise. Individuals may be loved by us merely because, and in so far as, they contribute to our own personal enjoyment. More frequently, far more frequently than we should be at first inclined to think, selfishness is

> "Disguised in gentle names
> Of peace and quiet and domestic love."

In other words, there is a self-denial which is merely an elaborate and subtle form of self-seeking.

Christian self-denial involves, as you all know, the sacrifice of one's self, not merely for one's own sake, but also for the sake of others. "We ought," says St John, "to lay down our lives for the brethren." Now I wish to point out to you that the self-sacrifice required of Christians is, in this respect as in others, a *reasonable* service; that when we directly aim at doing good to others, we indirectly achieve greater good for ourselves than any selfish conduct could accomplish; that, as our text puts it, he who loseth his life for Christ's sake shall find it.

A great many moralists and philosophers have insisted on self-surrender, because they despised and depreciated the individual. Gautama, the founder of Buddhism, maintained that belief in one's own personality was an illusion, which ought to be as speedily as possible dispelled; and he taught his disciples to look forward to extinction as the highest good. Buddhists therefore regard the mesmeric trance, in which all consciousness is lost, as the sublimest conquest of mind over matter—the nearest approach to perfection which is possible for us on this side annihilation. The philosophies of the Neo-Platonists and others are dominated by a similar notion. They teach that as God is one, human individ-

uality (which of course involves plurality) must be something different from God, and therefore bad. Hence in these systems the highest form of mental activity is represented as a sort of swoon, in which the sense of personality is lost, and the individual spirit is absorbed into the divine.

Christ did not insist on self-denial from any such notions as these. He did not inculcate it because He thought less of the individual than others, but because He thought more. The preciousness of *every* human being was one of our Lord's most fundamental doctrines. "How think ye?" He said to His disciples. "If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, He rejoiceth more over that sheep, than over the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." His belief in the importance and infinite value of the individual may be traced throughout the whole of the Saviour's teaching.[1]

[1] See 'Agnosticism, and other Sermons,' pp. 376-378.

In harmony with this is Christ's view of self-denial. One kind of moral training uses self-denial as a punishment or atonement. Because you have done so much which you ought not to have done, you shall surrender so much pleasure and suffer so much pain; or, if you will endure a certain number of fastings and flagellations, you may be allowed a certain amount of indulgence in your favourite vices. Another use to which self-denial is sometimes applied, is "to express the essential badness of the thing surrendered." Because the earth is inherently and altogether wicked, therefore, by all means in your power, endeavour to cultivate disgust for it. But with Jesus, self-sacrifice is always a necessary means to a reasonable end, and that end is self-development. We lose our life in order that we may truly gain it. This is what gives, it has been well said, to the self-denial which Christ demands of us, "a triumphant and enthusiastic air." "Not because you have not deserved to enjoy it, not because it is wicked to enjoy it, but because there is another enjoyment," or it may be something better than enjoyment, "more worthy of your nature, therefore let this inferior enjoyment go."

It is instructive to contrast the kingdom of

Christ with the Republic of Plato. In Plato's ideal State the individual was regarded as existing merely for the good of the community, and on behalf of the community he was entirely and ruthlessly sacrificed. All the details of his life—his prospects, his profession, his marriage, and so forth —were to be arranged for him by the state, just as the state thought best. The individual was to be allowed nothing which would not be directly conducive to the welfare of the society of which he was a member. But in the kingdom of Christ, on the other hand, nothing is demanded from the individual which is incompatible with his own wellbeing. He is required to sacrifice himself for others,—but only in such ways as indirectly conduce at the same time to his own highest good, only to such an extent as is absolutely necessary for his own complete development. Let us look at the rationale of this for a moment; let us try and see the part played by our fellow-men in maturing and perfecting our own individuality.

We have seen that a man is distinguished from an animal by the fact that he is able to regard his nature as a whole, and to gather up its passing experiences into the unity of a consistent life. But he is also, and still more strik-

ingly, distinguished by the fact that he can live in the lives of others. He may so identify himself with others as to make their lives his own; and unless he does this he is not really human. The isolated individual is not (properly speaking) a man, but only a fragment of humanity,—as really dead as an amputated limb which, in being cut off from the organism, is virtually cut off from itself. A man cannot realise himself within himself, cannot come to perfection by himself, but only in and through communion with others. There are some parts of the individual's life which are always in his brethren's keeping, and which he can only receive from them. A deeper self-hood, a richer personality, comes to a man from communion with others and sacrifice for others, than he could possibly have gained by any amount of solitary contemplation or self-aggrandisement. It is only as our individual, narrow, exclusive, isolated self is developed into a larger, inclusive, sympathetic self, that we come to our highest life. To go forth out of self, to have all the hidden wealth of feeling of which I am capable called forth towards others, and to receive back again this wealth redoubled in reciprocated affection and increased power of loving, this is to live wisely and well. Not to do this

is to eliminate from life all that makes it most truly human, all that makes it most really valuable.

The capacity of love and self-sacrifice is the capacity to make the happiness of others my own,—to identify my life with an ever-widening sphere of life beyond myself. As a rule, this capacity is called forth in early life; and when once it has been brought into exercise, it should grow with our growth and strengthen with our strength. In the home of our childhood we first began to learn that we were more than self-contained individuals; that we were capable of a larger and fuller life than such as pertains to mere isolated units; that our own happiness and wellbeing were enormously increased, when we contributed to the happiness and wellbeing of those with whom we lived. Then, as we grow older, we are brought into relationship with the community, the state, the race; and these more comprehensive relationships should develop in us more comprehensive affections. The members of the society in which I live may seem to be independent of me and foreign to me. But in reality they are not; they are part of myself; without them I have no real self, but merely the false self of a fragment taking itself for the whole.

It is only when the life of society flows into me that my own nature is fully developed; it is only when, like my Master, I go about doing good, gladdening and elevating the lives of all who come within my reach,—it is only then that I avail myself of the most glorious prerogative of my manhood.

Once more. The love of kindred and country may expand into a yet more comprehensive affection—the love of humanity; and when this affection is developed, the happiness of the individual becomes identified with the life and perfection of the race. "It is an indication," says Professor Caird, "of the highest moral progress, when nationality ceases to be the limit of sympathy, when the oppression of the remotest nation begins to appeal to us with a sense of personal injury, or when the story of a great act of injustice done to a single human soul breaks down the barrier of national exclusiveness, and evokes from all lands a cry as of pain and indignation for a universal wrong. In such incidents there is a witness to the slow advance of mankind towards that ideal of goodness, which Christians have ever recognised in One who loved all men with a love more intense than the love of kindred and country, and who offered up life itself

a sacrifice for the redemption of the world from evil." [1]

The self-denial, then, which Christ requires of us is not self-destruction, but self-completion; it is not self-mutilation, but self-development; it is not self-neglect, but self-fulfilment. It will bring us gradually to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. It does not ignore nor undervalue any of the various elements in our nature, but it enables them all to work together harmoniously for the perfecting of the whole man. He who has learned the lesson of self-sacrifice is so changed from what he was before he learned it, that he may emphatically be called a new creature, and yet he is not less a man than formerly; rather, we should say, it is he, and such as he alone, who really deserve that exalted title. In one sense the lower elements have ceased to be; they are no longer what they were — supreme; they no longer blindly seek their own unguided or misguided ends; they are now instrumental in accomplishing the higher ends of the mind, the heart, and the spirit. They

[1] For much of the thought and expression on pp. 153-155 I am indebted to 'The Philosophy of Religion,' by Principal Caird, and 'The Influence of Jesus,' by the Rev. Phillips Brooks, Rector of Trinity Church, Boston.

have ceased to be, just as dead matter, in becoming part of a living organism, passes out of its former state of existence into a higher. In one sense, the narrow, partial, and exclusive self has ceased to be, for it is no longer narrow; it has been developed into a self of broader views, of loftier aims, of enlarged capacities for enjoyment. It has ceased to be, as a child that has grown up into manhood.

Since, then, Christian self-sacrifice is so eminently reasonable, it might appear as if every reasonable creature would find it easy. But we all know by our own sad experience that it is not. Schleiermacher has well observed, that the lower elements in our nature, the more exclusively selfish tendencies, *get the start* of the higher and more unselfish; and as they are not only sooner developed, but more frequently exercised, they become strengthened by that tremendous power which is known as the force of habit. For some men the struggle between inclination and duty is terrific; for all of us, to say the least, it is hard. We may delight in the law of God after the inward man, and yet find another law in our members warring against the law of our minds, and bringing it into subjection to the law of sin which is in our members. We may see and ap-

prove the better course, and yet choose the worse. However clearly we may discern the folly of an excessive indulgence in selfish enjoyments; however clearly we may perceive the importance of subordinating the lower elements of our nature to the higher, and of considering others as well as ourselves; however strongly we may be convinced as to the reasonableness of the course which it is our duty to pursue,—nevertheless, acting up to our convictions will cost us effort, suffering, it may be anguish. For a while we may feel as if, in the emphatic language of the apostle, we were dying daily,—as if we were being crucified with Christ.

After a time, however, the conflict will become less severe. By and by it may almost entirely cease. The force of habit, which at first was on the side of the lower tendencies and the narrower self, will, if we persevere, at length be ranged against them. The more we experience the noble enjoyment of doing good, the less attraction will selfish indulgences possess for us. At last the very pain of self-sacrifice will become sweeter than the pleasure of self-aggrandisement. "There have been men," says Principal Caird, "who have felt in their country's humiliation and loss a far sharper pang than in any personal

suffering, and the offering up of life itself has had a strange sweetness in it, if the sacrifice could avert or retrieve her ruin. For such a man pain and pleasure are words which have almost ceased to have any personal significance. Self-indulgence at the expense of others would be a greater self-denial, a thing fraught with keener anguish, than any private suffering; it would be an injury done to a dearer self for the sake of a self he has ceased to care for—nay, which in one sense has ceased to exist." Of such a man it may be truly as well as poetically said,—

> "Love took up the harp of life, and smote on all the chords with might,—
> Smote the chord of self, that trembling passed in music out of sight."

The old meagre paltry life is gone. The life which he now lives is broad and deep, noble and heroic, Christ-like and divine.[1]

[1] On this subject see also 'Agnosticism, and other Sermons,' pp. 352-365.

The Connection between Self-denial and Self-development.

IV.

LOVE ESSENTIAL TO SELF-DEVELOPMENT.

"Love is the fulfilling of the law."—ROMANS xiii. 10.

THE context reads, "Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

We have seen that to live a completely human life is to live in the lives of others. The attempt

to live entirely for one's self is to make, not the best of one's life, but the worst. Unless we do our duty towards our neighbour, we fail to do our whole duty towards ourselves. We only *find* our life by *losing* it; that is to say, then only do we truly live, when the narrow, meagre, self-contained life belonging to us as isolated individuals, has given place to the broad, deep, sympathetic life of communion and affection, belonging to us as members of a family, of a country, of a race. Now it is manifest that the development of this higher life will involve self-denial. Personal inclinations must be subordinated to the general good. Our own pleasure must be foregone if it would cause pain to others. Private interests must give way when they clash with the larger interests of society. But, as Burns truly says,—

> "But och! mankind are unco weak,
> And little to be trusted;
> If *self* the wavering balance shake,
> It's rarely right adjusted!"

It would seem then, at first sight, as if the higher life of unselfishness were quite beyond our reach. How can we ever hope to fulfil the law which saith, "Thou shalt do no ill to thy neighbour"? How shall we ever be able to

practise the requisite amount of self-denial? This question is, I think, answered in our text, "Love is the fulfilling of the law."

The "natural man," as he is called in the New Testament—that is, the man who is trying to live exclusively for himself—looks upon the law as a nuisance. Why, he asks, should it be fulfilled? It acts as a check upon his inclinations and passions, and so he considers it his enemy; he would fain do away with it altogether. His duty towards his neighbour he regards as a curtailment of his own rightful pleasures. To any one in this state of mind I should like to say,—My good sir, if you will reflect upon the matter for a very little, you can scarcely fail to see that law is in reality your most useful friend. Law, throughout the whole universe, is the essential condition, the *sine quâ non*, of wellbeing. Would the world be a better place to live in, think you, if there were no law of planetary motion?—if the stars, instead of revolving, as they do, with mathematical precision, in orbits marked out for them by the law of gravitation, were at liberty to move in any direction with any velocity? Better! Why, this earth of ours, set free from the control of law, might one day be as far from the

sun as Neptune, where we should die of cold, and the next as near as Mercury, where our frozen remains would be cremated. And law is infinitely more necessary in the social than in the physical sphere. The great thing requisite to make human life even tolerable is security; and this, of course, we could never feel if every one were at liberty to treat every one else exactly as he might happen to please. In that case we should live in a state of universal warfare and continual dread. Without law the human race would quickly perish, self-destroyed. We owe to law, therefore, a debt of gratitude as well as a debt of obedience. Though it forbids our injuring others, it also forbids our being injured by others. Though it marks out our duties, it also protects our rights. Though it has punishments for the guilty, it also has rewards for the just. As the water which is evaporated from the surface of the earth returns again in fertilising showers, so we are compensated for the self-restraint which the law demands of us by that which it exacts from others, and by the consequent security in which we are enabled to live. "Of law," says Hooker, in the celebrated sentence with which he closes the first book of his 'Ecclesiastical Polity,'—"Of law there can be no less

acknowledged than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world. All things in heaven and earth do her homage: the least as not beneath her care, and the greatest as not exempted from her power: both angels and men, and all creatures of what condition soever, though each in a different sort and manner, yet each with uniform consent, admiring her as the mother of their peace and joy." If this, then, be the nature and value of law, its fulfilment will be eminently rational and desirable.

We thus arrive, I may point out in passing, by another route, at a similar conclusion to that which we reached in the last discourse. We there saw that our lives could only be perfected by the sacrifice of personal gratification for the general good. We now perceive that law, though at first sight it may appear to have been devised solely in the interest of others, is absolutely essential for our own wellbeing. The point, however, with which we are at present specially concerned is this,—we shall only be able to achieve the self-denial that is involved in the fulfilment of the law, when love becomes the ruling passion of our lives.

The law, of course, is often obeyed on account of the punishment which would follow its viola-

tion. A person may pay his debts, for instance, because, if he do not, he will go to prison. But you can never be quite sure that the law will be obeyed when you only appeal to fear. If a man be a clever scoundrel he may avoid detection, or, if detected, he may perhaps be able to make his escape before the punishment can be inflicted. And a stupid scoundrel, probably not knowing that he is stupid, will often run a similar risk. So, while the law depends solely upon fear for its fulfilment, however vigilant may be our police, however upright our courts of justice, however severe may be the condemnation of society, we have no security for its fulfilment, and as a matter of fact we know that it is constantly being violated.

Further, the law is not fulfilled by those who are satisfied with the mere fulfilment of its letter. You see the letter of the law is enforced by the punishment of society, and just because so enforced it is of necessity very limited in its scope. As Bentham explains in his principles of jurisprudence, the written law only takes cognisance of vices which can be clearly defined and readily distinguished. If it attempted to cover a larger area—if, for example, it endeavoured to punish ingratitude or unkindness—it would do more

harm than good. It is difficult, or rather impossible, to find out when and to what extent such sins have been committed. If, therefore, the law attempted to deal with them, it would be in constant danger of punishing the less guilty or even the innocent, and of allowing the more guilty to get off scot-free. And further, this unjust administration of justice would involve an amount of inquisitive surveillance which would be more hurtful to society than the evils which, after all, it failed to prevent. For these reasons, then, the *spirit* of the law, which is "Thou shalt do no ill to thy neighbour," has to be narrowed in the *letter*, where we read only, "Thou shalt not injure thy neighbour in a certain few definite ways." From this, of course, it follows that the man who is contented with keeping the letter of the law is most undoubtedly guilty of violating its spirit. He goes but a little way along the path of duty. We sometimes meet with men who never commit any punishable injury, but who are to the last degree cold, callous, hard-hearted, and selfish. We are quite sure they would not rob or murder us, but we are equally sure they would not move their little finger to do us any good, would not raise their hand to save us from destruction. These men do incalculable

mischief, and that of the worst kind. They injure the moral nature of their neighbours, whose best affections are dwarfed, or it may be destroyed, by their inhumanity, just as fruit is blighted by the frost. They do all that in them lies to make other men into moral pigmies like themselves. Hence, though they are not guilty of any punishable breach of the law, they are guilty of violating its spirit,—they do ill to their neighbours.

Now Christ saw, what the wisest philosophers before Him had failed to see, that the law could only be fulfilled by love—in other words, that we could only avoid injuring others by actually doing them good. In the kingdom of Christ, not only has a man's neighbour ceased to be his enemy, but he has actually become his friend. This idea lies at the root of all Christ's work and teaching. The kingdom which He founded is one in which the members are to be united by the ties of brotherly kindness. "All ye are brethren," he said to His disciples; and, again, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." This new commandment summed up and supplemented all the old.

Understood in the sense in which Christ meant it to be understood, as referring, not to a transient sentimentalism, but to a life-long practice, it covers the whole field of human existence. Love inevitably leads to those self-sacrificing acts of kindliness which we have seen to be essential to complete self-development; and therefore St John says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." The narrow, meagre, paltry, isolated life which the unloving live is more properly called death. Then alone do we truly live, then alone do we live the Christ-like and divine life for which we were created, when we are inspired and actuated by love; for nothing but this can enable us to find our happiness, as we ought to find it, in the happiness of others. The importance of the new commandment is everywhere insisted upon throughout the New Testament. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels," says St Paul, "and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to

feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." But the strongest evidence as to the comprehensiveness of the new commandment is to be found in the fact, that Christ intimates the divine verdict upon our life will be favourable or unfavourable, according as this commandment has been obeyed or neglected. "Come! . . . *for* I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in." "Depart! . . . *for* I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in."

According to the plain teaching of the New Testament, then—according to the explicit statement of our lord—no man can be a Christian, however orthodox his creed, however numerous his religious observances, unless he is inspired and actuated by the spirit of love.

And if you ask me how you may become so inspired, I answer, first of all and to some extent by reflection. This love is far more amenable to reason than the passion which goes by the same name. "We may set ourselves," as George Eliot has put it,—we may studiously set ourselves "to learn something of the poetry and pathos lying

in the experience of all human souls; poetry and pathos that look out through dull grey eyes, and that speak in a voice of quite ordinary tones." We might know something of this if we would only *think*. And such knowledge would inevitably give birth to sympathy.

But though reflection will do much to develop in us a loving spirit, attachment to Christ Himself will do infinitely more. This was why Christ so strongly insisted upon the necessity of His disciples loving Him. As the author of 'Ecce Homo' truly says, "Christ required personal devotion from His followers so vehemently, that they often, in describing their relation to Him, overleap the bounds of ordinary figurative language. They speak of hating father and mother for the sake of Christ,—that is, their love for their earthly relations seemed but as hatred when compared with their passionate love for Him. St Paul speaks of Christ being his life, his very self. It is this intense personal devotion, this habitual feeding on the character of Christ, so that the essential nature of the Master seems to pass into and become the essential nature of the servant, that is expressed in the words, 'eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of man.'" Christ insisted upon this

devotion, because He knew the invaluable effect it would have upon the lives of His disciples. Just as a ray of light, when examined by the spectroscope, reveals the nature of the medium through which it has travelled, so our lives will undoubtedly show whether or not we have been influenced by the teaching and the example of the Nazarene. If we are genuine disciples, men will take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus. If we are genuine disciples, we shall manifest something of His sublime spirit of self-abnegation, something of His passionate enthusiasm for the wellbeing of the race. If we are genuine disciples, we shall go about constantly, not so much getting as doing good; seeking to minister rather than to be ministered unto; finding our supreme happiness in contributing to the happiness of others. Passing from the society of those who are utterly destitute of Christ's spirit into the company of those who are somewhat imbued with it, is like migrating from the cutting east winds of our English climate to the gentle, sweet-scented breezes of the South. Nay, it is like going into another and a grander world. Christ's kingdom, as He said, is not of this world. It is the Kingdom of God! It is the Kingdom of Heaven!

The Connection between Self-denial and Self-development.

V.

SELF-DEVELOPMENT IS SALVATION.

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure."—PHILIPPIANS ii. 12, 13.

AMONG all the spurious forms of Christianity there is nothing worse than the doctrine that we are saved if we are saved, and lost if we are lost, according to the will of God and not according to our own. The theory of fatalism has sometimes unhappily been adopted by Christian theologians, who have maintained that men were not free agents, but necessitated, irresistibly compelled to work out the will of a higher Power. If that were really the case, we might say mournfully and indignantly with the poet,—

"We are no better than a moving row
Of tragic shadow-shapes, that come and go
Round with the sun-illumined lantern, held
At midnight by the master of the show;
Impotent pieces of the game he plays
Upon his chequer-board of nights and days;
Hither and thither moves, and checks and slays,
And one by one back in the cupboard lays."

If the salvation of Christ were a benefit conferred only upon a few arbitrarily selected individuals; if God forced some men into the kingdom of heaven and only some, leaving the rest bad and wretched, when He might have made them good and happy; if He ordained that they should be heirs of eternal life when He wanted them in heaven, but allowed them to remain heirs of death when He preferred their going to hell,—if this were the character of the strongest Power in the universe, then the human race would be merely a collection of puppets—helpless, hapless puppets—played with according to the caprice of a Being the very opposite of love,—a Being in comparison with whom the cruellest tyrant of history or fiction appears kind-hearted, amiable, and beneficent.[1]

[1] The impossibility of worshipping Power as such, I have endeavoured to show in the 'Basis of Religion,' *passim.* The fundamental objection to Mr Drummond's 'Natural Law in the Spiritual World' is, that it supposes spiritual life to come

There is another almost equally gross caricature of Christianity, which represents salvation as being merely a rescue from the punishment of sin. This is a theology worthy only of a savage. Many barbarians believe that religion consists in appeasing the anger of the gods, which accordingly they attempt to do by the grateful savour of barley, wine, or blood. They are firmly convinced that if their spiteful deities can be propitiated, they themselves will be able to do what they please with impunity. They are not more in error than those who imagine that Christ lived and died merely to save men from the punishment of sin. His aim was to save us from sin itself. Unless we are saved from *that*, it is impossible, even for Omnipotence, to save us from its punishment. Sin is not something which God has chosen capriciously to forbid and to punish, but something which, by its own essential nature, must inevitably be productive of misery and degradation. So long as the cause continues in operation, the effect must necessarily follow. Heaven and hell are not spheres to which men are arbitrarily consigned. The place a man goes to in the future, as in the present, must be

to men in this haphazard, Calvinistic fashion, and so virtually denies all human responsibility.

emphatically *his own* place, the place for which he has prepared himself. As Milton finely puts it,—

> "The mind is its own place, and in itself
> Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven."

> "Which way I fly is hell,"

says Satan—

> "Myself am hell."

The worst of all torture for a bad man is to bring him into the society of the good. To one who hated righteousness, heaven would be a more frightful place than hell. How could he bear, in the tattered and filthy rags of his uncleanliness, to come into contact with those who had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb? If the worm that dieth not and the flame that is not quenched — if the pangs of conscience and remorse — would plague him in hell, when surrounded by those who were as bad or worse than himself, think you not that they would plague him with an infinitely sharper sting in heaven, where he would be confronted by the spirits of the just made perfect? To take any one who was unfitted for it into the highest heaven, would be in reality to thrust him lower than the lowest hell.

We cannot, therefore, be saved from punish-

ment without being saved from sin; nor can we be saved from sin without our own co-operation. That our salvation, in the last resort, depends upon ourselves, is brought out very strikingly in our text. The meaning of the expression, "God worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure," is, that according to His good pleasure—that is, in harmony with His love—He makes us free agents. The freedom of the will is a conception of Christian origin, and it is one of the most fundamental doctrines of Christianity. But, as you are aware, ideas exist in men's minds long before words have been coined to correspond. This is why the Apostle Paul speaks here somewhat periphrastically. Instead of saying, as we should now say, God makes you free agents, he says, God works in you to will and to do.

The gift of freedom is our most glorious prerogative. In making us free, God created us in His own image. Descartes truly says, "It is chiefly my will that leads me to discern that I bear a certain similitude to Deity. For although the faculty of will is incomparably greater in God than in myself, in so far as it extends to a greater number of objects, it does not seem to be greater considered in itself. For the power of

will consists only in this, that we are able to do or not to do the same thing, undetermined by any external force."

But the possession of this faculty involves the most serious responsibility. No one who has a will can be saved against his will. We saw, when we were considering the origin of evil, that a man could not be compelled to do right, for if compelled he would be deprived of his freedom, and if he were deprived of his freedom he would cease to be a man. An action performed on compulsion has no *moral* value, however desirable it may be in itself. The worth of an action depends on the fact that something else might have been done, but was not. If God *could* compel *any* man to do right, He *ought* to compel *all*. That He *does not* compel all, should be proof enough (if proof were needed) that He *cannot* compel any. Hence the fact that we are free is a reason why we should work with fear and trembling. It is possible for us to prostitute our freedom, and with it to work out our ruin. Every time we suffer ourselves to be conquered by temptation our will is weakened. By constantly yielding we may to all intents and purposes completely lose our power of choice. It is possible for a man, although created originally in

the image of God, to sink below the level of a brute, and become as incapable of self-control as a feather fluttering in the wind. By an uninterrupted course of persistence in evil we may make our salvation practically impossible.

> "The bough that went, when green, awry,
> Will not come straight when old and dry."

On the other hand, every time we conquer temptation our own strength is increased, and the forces opposed to us are weakened. We may rise eventually into a sphere where evil will cease to be attractive, and where conflict will, therefore, give place to repose.

> "Our deeds still travel with us from afar,
> And what we have been makes us what we are."

Our salvation, then, cannot be thrust upon us by God. It depends upon the use which we make of our freedom. Why, external influences will not do everything even for a vegetable. Not all the sunshine and rain and air in the universe will ever, of themselves, clothe a tree with leaves. Without the responsive action of the sap within, the tree will remain barren and unsightly, a blot upon the fairest summer landscape. Still less can mere external influences bring to perfection a rational child of God. The

great Father has done for us, we may be sure, all that He can do. What remains must be done, if done at all, by ourselves. God can no more do our work than we can do God's. We could not have created ourselves; we could not have taught ourselves what Christ has taught us. But having been created, and having been taught, *we alone* can decide whether we will be true to the nature with which we have been endowed,—whether we will be loyal followers of the Nazarene. Christ finished our salvation on the divine side; we must finish it on the human. Christ made it possible, we must make it real.

Now salvation, properly so called, is, as I said, salvation from sin, and sin is only another name for selfishness. It results, as we have seen, from the narrow, sensuous self being made supreme, instead of being subordinated, as it should be, to the broader, spiritual, sympathetic self, which finds its chief happiness in contributing to the happiness of others. What is the one characteristic which belongs alike to your dishonest tradesmen and to your dishonourable professional men, to your oppressive masters and fraudulent servants, to your cruel husbands and faithless wives, and so forth? Why, just selfishness. If these men and women could only be made to obey the

golden rule of Jesus of Nazareth; if they could be made to feel that it is really more blessed to give than to receive; if they could be imbued with the spirit which is thoughtfully considerate for others,—then, instead of making the world more wretched every hour they live, they would be transformed into useful members of society, each one of them contributing to the welfare of the rest.

Christ saw, what none had seen before Him, that men needed to be saved, not from divine vengeance, but from themselves — from their lower, meaner selves. We noticed that the subjugation of the lower self to the higher, the development of the narrower self into the broader, is possible only for the man who is inspired and actuated by the spirit of love; and that the possession of such a spirit is made, in the New Testament, the criterion of genuine discipleship. "By this," said our Lord, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Nay, more, Christ declared that our acceptance or rejection upon the great day of reckoning, would depend upon whether or not we had performed the self-sacrificing acts of kindliness by which a loving spirit is inevitably manifested. We further noticed that the greatest

aid in living a life of self-denial was personal devotion to Christ Himself,—devotion so intense, that the nature of the Master seemed to pass into and become the nature of the servant. Now this devotion, this absorption of the character of Christ, is not only the very essence of Christian worship, but it is also the earnest of immortality. "Whoso eateth my flesh," said our Lord, "and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

So when we thus take a comprehensive view of the matter, we discover that self-development by means of self-denial involves nothing short of everlasting salvation. There is absolute harmony between one's own highest good and the highest good of others.

> "To thine own self be true,
> And it must follow, as the night the day,
> Thou canst not then be false to any man."

There is absolute harmony between our proper work in this world and our proper preparation for the next. "He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him." "We debate," says the rector of a church in Boston, "whether self-culture or our brethren's service is the true purpose of life; we vacillate aimlessly between them. Now we shut ourselves up, and

meditate and try to grow. Now we rush forth and make the world ring with what we call our work. The two so often have no connection with each other. We are so apt to live two lives. Jesus knows but one. All culture of His soul is part of our salvation. All doing of His work is ripening of His nature. Jesus in the still night, far off upon the solitary hill-top; Jesus in the broad daylight, dragged by the hooting mob to Calvary, — both of them are Jesus saving the world. Christ escaped the perplexity of many of the questions with which our lives are troubled, as the eagle flying through the sky is not worried how to cross the rivers." The salvation of Christ is all-comprehensive in its scope, and therefore well worth the effort of working out. Saving ourselves is no selfish task, — it is learning to be kind. On the one hand, no man can come to his best by selfishness; and on the other, no man can do much for his fellow-men who is not much himself. On the one hand, no man can make the best of his present without regarding it as preparatory to the future; and on the other, no man can properly fit himself for the next world unless he does his duty here. To prepare for heaven is not merely to build up a noble

character, but to become a creator of happiness, an inspirer of nobility. It is to work for the good of humanity,—for the good of the entire universe.

Our proper life-work can be accomplished by no one but ourselves. Unless we do it, it will remain eternally undone.

> "Remember every soul He made
> Is *different*,—has some deed to do,
> Some work to work; be undismayed
> Though thine be humble: do it too."

If you do it, rest assured the good that results will be eternal. There is a conservation of energy in the moral, as in the physical, sphere. Not a single particle of *matter* is ever destroyed. It may pass into new shapes, it may combine with other elements, it may float away into vapour; but it will come back, possibly in the dewdrop or the rain, helping the leaf to grow and the fruit to swell. "So is it," says Leo Grindon, "with every generous self-denying effort. It may escape our observation and be utterly forgotten,—it may seem to have been altogether useless; but it has become part of the moral world, it has given it new enrichment and beauty,—the whole universe partakes of its influence." It is possible for each of us so to live

as to leave this world better than we found it, and to enhance by our presence the happiness and glory of the next. This is the work which God has given us to do. Shall it be accomplished by us, or shall it not? It *ought* to be, —it *can* be.

> "So nigh to grandeur is our dust,
> So nigh is God to man,
> When duty whispers low, 'Thou must!'
> The soul replies, 'I can.'"

"What is Truth?"

The context reads: "Pilate saith unto Him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out."—JOHN xviii. 38.

PILATE, you see, did not wait for a reply. Bacon calls him "jesting Pilate." Hegel speaks of his "genteel indifference." But I think his conduct is rather to be explained by the fact that he belonged to the class of men called sometimes Pyrrhonists, sometimes Sceptics, and sometimes Agnostics, who hold that it is impossible for us to attain to any certain knowledge. And so he said half contemptuously, half sadly, "What *is* truth?" and with a shrug of the shoulders turned upon his heel. But whatever may have been Pilate's state of mind on this occasion, let us avoid imitating his example in one respect at least,—let us wait for a reply.[1]

[1] The majority of men, as the author of 'Obiter Dicta' bluntly puts it, instead of seeking an answer to the question, "What is truth?" are content with the humbler inquiry, "What is trumps?"

I do not propose in the present sermon to say anything to Agnostics. My aim is rather to throw a little light on the subject, if I can, for those who have already some faith in the possibility of attaining to certainty.

There are two senses in which the word truth is commonly employed,—either for fact, or for the harmony between our thought and fact. This harmony between thought and fact, or between thought and its object, may be better expressed by the term knowledge. We may be said to know anything when we think about it just what we should,—when we think it as it is. I should prefer to apply the term truth to that which is known, rather than to the knowledge itself. This is the way in which it is often used in common speech. For example, when we speak of revealed truths, we are manifestly referring to certain *objects* of knowledge,—to certain persons, events, and doctrines that may be known. Christ, too, used the word in this sense when He said, "I am the Truth,"—the supreme object of knowledge.

In whichever sense we use the term,—whether for fact or for the knowledge of fact,—it is of the utmost importance to distinguish truth from opinion. The word "truth" is no doubt connected etymologically with the verb *to trow*. Accordingly

Horne Tooke tells us, truth is "that which a man troweth." But this is precisely what truth is not, if we understand "troweth" in its present acceptation. We must go back to its original meaning. "Trow" is connected with an old Sanscrit root signifying fixed or firm, and this suggests the proper signification of the word truth. While opinions constantly change, truth is that which does not and cannot change. While opinions may be false, truth cannot but be true. Truth is something which is the same for all, whatever may be their opinions or absence of opinions; something which should be believed in because it can be proved, not something which should be considered proved because it is believed in. Just so is it with what we call fact. Facts do not alter with our ever-varying opinions; for a thing must be what it is whether we believe it or not. If a man takes poison he will be poisoned, however loudly he may vociferate that he believed it to be medicine. Fact is firm, steadfast, reliable, remaining always the same, however much our opinions may change in regard to it. Generally the word Truth is restricted to the most important kinds of facts. We speak of physical facts, and of moral or religious truths. But this distinction is unnecessary and rather misleading. For all

facts are realities; and truth comprehends everything that is real.

If, then, you understand truths to be synonymous with facts, you may say that all facts are part of that vast whole which is summed up in the word Truth. Or, if you prefer to use the term in the second sense, for the harmony between thought and fact—that is, for knowledge—it will follow that all facts are parts of that whole, the knowledge of which is summed up in the word Truth.

Broadly speaking, we may distinguish three spheres of truth. There is, first, the truth involved in and revealed by nature; second, that involved in and revealed by man; third, that involved in and revealed by Christ. Though these spheres of truth may be legitimately recognised as distinct, yet it must be remembered their connection with one another is very close and very important. A knowledge of one of them will throw great light upon the others, and ignorance in regard to one will inevitably darken and confuse the rest.

First, as to physical truth, or the truth of nature. The Duke of Argyll has well said, that "indifference to truth, in apparently the most distant spheres of thought, may and does relax

the most powerful springs of action." He is right. The connection, *e.g.*, between hygiene, or the laws of health, and your religious welfare, is closer perhaps than you imagine. The more extensive is your knowledge of those laws, the better will it be for you spiritually as well as temporally. If you eat too much or too little, if you sleep too long or too short a time, if you work too hard or not hard enough, if you indulge in recreations too often or too seldom, if you in any way violate the laws of your own nature—laws which can be fully understood only after careful investigation and study—not only will your life be shortened, but your character will be deteriorated. It is of little avail for the spirit to be willing when the flesh is weak. Discontentment, despondency, despair, and suicide not unfrequently result from a dyspepsia which is due to ignorance or carelessness.

The laws of the human body, however, are only a very small portion of physical truth, indifference to any part of which is the sign of a moral languor incompatible with real greatness or goodness. Every fact of nature is interesting and important, not only for its own sake, but because it is "a window through which we can look into infinity." How constantly Christ

discovered spiritual meanings in natural objects and events! And we ought, in some degree, to do the same. To the far-seeing man the vision of nature is the vision of God.

Secondly, there is the truth involved in and revealed by man,—by man, that is, considered as a mental and spiritual being. The facts and laws of the human mind are worthy of study, partly for their own sake, partly for the intellectual vigour and discipline to be gained in the process, but especially, I apprehend, because the mind of man is in some respects similar to the mind of God. Were it different in *kind* as well as in *degree*, knowledge of God, and still more communion with God, would be impossible. He has breathed into us His spirit, we have been created in His image, we are the sons of God. Such expressions as King, Judge, Sovereign, Father, when applied to God, mean nothing if they do not mean that there is a resemblance between the divine and human natures, as well as between the divine and human relationships. The late Dean Mansel, I know, in his Bampton Lecture on 'The Limits of Religious Thought,' maintains the opposite view. He says that we cannot argue from ourselves to God; that the words personality, justice, love, &c., when applied to

God, are used in different senses from those in which we apply them to men, and that in the one application they may mean quite the contrary of what they may mean in the other. Now nothing could have been further from the Dean's intention than to reduce the Christian God to the same level of abstraction as Herbert Spencer's "Unknowable"; but this is the only possible conclusion from his premisses. If words meant one thing when applied to man, and another when applied to God, then all reasoning and speaking about the Divine Being would be a ridiculous waste of time. It is of no use to say that God is just, unless we mean by "just" what we generally mean when we use that word. We had better say we do not know whether He is just or unjust. And the same remark applies to every other attribute. It is evident, therefore, that God can be for us, on this view, nothing more than the Great Unknown. The doctrine of St Chrysostom and St Augustine seems to me far more correct. "Through my own mind I ascend to God." "Self-knowledge is the highest of all knowledge, for he who truly knows himself knows God." Just as an orrery will enable a child to understand something of the mechanism of the heavens, whereas he would be

perfectly bewildered if he were to contemplate the heavens themselves, so the finite could never know anything of the infinite, except through the medium of its own finitude. God, like the noonday sun, can only be seen "through a glass darkly," — in other words, through the human mind.

The macrocosm and the microcosm, then,—the great world without us and the little world within,—are important spheres of truth; important for their own sake, but especially important for what they suggest and reveal of God. There is, however, as I have intimated, a third sphere more important still, — namely, that which is contained in and revealed by Christ. Christ taught men that their Creator was no capricious or spiteful being, but a God of love, who is their Judge and King only in virtue of and in subserviency to His Fatherhood. Christ taught men that their profound, and hitherto unintelligible, yearnings were but the natural longing of the human heart for filial communion with the divine; and He declared that there was no barrier between themselves and God, except their own mistaken notion that He was unforgiving and revengeful. Christ's ministry, crowned, completed, and glorified by His death, was one pro-

longed manifestation of love, and of the fact that God is love. "In Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Christ was therefore the great Revealer of religious truth. He was, we may say, that truth itself, in its deepest and sublimest phases, sensibly presented before the world, so that to look on Christ is to see the truth. "The truth of truths is love."

Now let us ask, What is the relation between creeds and truth? Surely I need scarcely say, that if you wish in the very faintest measure to apprehend any fragment of the truth as it is in Jesus, you must penetrate far below the surface-meaning of any mere form of words. The knowledge of a creed can be, at the best, but elementary knowledge. It should be the beginning of our acquaintance with truth—it can never be the end. A creed is just a register of results in the search for truth. It has been transmitted to us, or should have been transmitted, for the guidance, and not for the extinction, of future thought and investigation. It is a starting-point—not a goal. Just as an invading army makes good each position gained by planting a citadel, so creeds are fortresses as it were, from which we can make further incursions into the still outstanding, still unconquered realms of truth. How vast are those

outstanding realms which still remain for us to conquer! Truth cannot be symbolised by a circle, but rather by an infinite line.

Theology, like all other sciences, should be progressive. The Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Oxford drew attention some time ago to the danger of theology becoming stagnant, and warned theologians against resting contented with a mere reproduction of the past. But there are many persons who believe that theology *ought* to be stagnant, who regard any attempt to get beyond our ancestors as a sort of juvenile impertinence. This is not the doctrine of our Church. Our daily services are brought to a close with the prayer of St Chrysostom, in which we use the words, "Granting us in this world knowledge of Thy truth." The self-satisfied dogmatists, if they were consistent, should say instead, "Granting us in this world remembrance of our creed."

All earnest, thoughtful men and women must feel the force of the words,—

> "Our little systems have their day;
> They have their day and cease to be:
> They are but broken lights of Thee,
> And Thou, O Lord, art more than they."

You laugh at the infant who cries for the moon, and thinks that his nurse, if she were only so

disposed, might fetch it and give it him for a football. You laugh at the child who sets himself the task of carrying away the waters of the ocean in his tiny pail. You laugh at the barbarian who fancies, when he first comes upon the sea, that he has reached the end of the world. You would laugh if a man who proposed to build himself a house, became so pleased with the foundation that he thought it unnecessary to go on with the building. You would laugh if an athlete, who was going to run a race, grew enamoured of the arrangements at the first end of the course, and while others were pressing on towards the goal, contented himself with running round and round the starting-post. But I will tell you of something more laughable still. There is no conceivable object in the universe of God half so ludicrous or absurd, as the being who thinks that as soon as he can repeat his creed like a parrot, he has mastered truth; who imagines that truth — illimitable, infinite, ever-unfolding truth—is deposited in a corner of his own finite mind,—a mind that is not only finite but small, shrivelled into almost nothing for the want of use. Did I say such an one was a fit object for laughter? I was wrong. I should have said for tears; for he too *might have been a man.*

What, then, is the conclusion of the whole matter? Why, this. Truth has heights and depths and lengths and breadths, which eternity itself will be too short to traverse and explore. Truth is high as heaven, deep as hell, broad as the universe, infinite as God, everlasting as eternity. The answer to the question, "What is truth?" is one which will be ever telling, yet never completely told. In our present state we are at a disadvantage. We are painfully conscious that there is

> "A deep below the deep,
> And a height beyond the height:
> Our hearing is not hearing,
> And our seeing is not sight."

But, throughout the never-ending cycles of eternity, we may, if we will, continually rise, by means of the truths already acquired, as upon stepping-stones, to truth still higher, still nobler, still more sublime.

Christian Manliness.

I.

RIGHT DOING.

"Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it."—JEREMIAH v. 1.

IN Hebrew, just as in Latin and Greek and other languages, there are two words for Man,—the one applicable to the whole human species, as distinguished from the lower animals, the other applicable only to those who possess the noblest characteristics of manhood—to those whom, in English, we should call manly men, or heroes. It is, of course, the latter of these words that is used in our text. There were thousands of beings in Jerusalem who had the outward semblance of men; but the question was, whether

any of them had a manly character. Alas! the expression, "a manly man," is by no means tautological. The noun refers to the body, the adjective to the soul. It is quite possible to have the body of a man and the soul of a baby; or worse, to have the body of a man and the soul of a beast; or worst of all, to have the body of a man and the soul of a fiend.

Two qualities are mentioned in our text as characteristic of the real, genuine, *bonâ fide* man —he executeth judgment, and seeketh the truth. Executing judgment may be better expressed in modern English by the phrase "doing right." And there is no article before the word truth in the original, so it should be taken in its widest signification. A manly man, then, is one who does right and seeks for truth.

I may perhaps just point out, parenthetically in passing, that the same qualities are characteristic of a womanly woman. Women should be in some respects different from men, though not a few of them at present seem in danger of forgetting this. We do not admire—if we be refined and sensible persons—women who dress like men, and walk like men, and talk like men, and look like men. And similarly we do not like a woman whose character, considered as a

whole, would be called masculine. There are qualities which are charming in a woman but contemptible in a man. There are qualities, again, which both should possess, but which we expect to find more highly developed in the one sex than in the other. But the genuine woman, no less than the genuine man, must do right and seek truth.

I have selected this passage from the Old Testament because it sums up in a striking manner almost the whole of what I shall have to say. The doctrine of the Old Testament in regard to manliness is, however, the doctrine of the New. The importance of what, in theological language, is called "works," is not diminished, but increased, in the Christian dispensation. Genuine faith in Christ inevitably produces a more or less Christ-like life. Some professed followers of the Nazarene are so utterly ignorant of the first principles of His religion, as to believe that the advantage of being a Christian lies mainly in the fact that it relieves them from the necessity of doing right. If such persons have ever opened their Bibles, they certainly cannot have read as far as the seventh chapter of St Matthew's Gospel, where we read, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the

kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Again, with regard to the search for truth, St Paul speaks as emphatically as Jeremiah: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." And lastly, as to the social value of manliness, implied in the words "I will pardon it," we find the same idea expressed by Christ in such passages as the following—"Ye are the salt of the earth;" "For the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." Now, all these scattered thoughts seem to be gathered up and forcibly expressed in the passage which I have chosen as a text.

In the present sermon we must restrict ourselves to the first test of genuine manliness. The question whether or not a human being deserves to be called a *man*, in the highest signification of that word, is to be decided in the first instance by the criterion, Does he or does he not do right? It is a matter for serious reflection, whether real, genuine men are not almost as rare in England

to-day as they would appear to have been in Palestine in the days of Jeremiah.

Just think, first of all, of the frauds daily perpetrated in commerce. You have heard the phrase "commercial morality," and you know it is a euphonious expression for the *im*moralities of trade,—immoralities which men try to persuade themselves the force of custom has rendered moral. The commonest form of cheating is perhaps the adulteration of food. There is scarcely anything we eat or drink which is not, to a greater or less extent, different from what it professes to be. I need not remind you that there was a time when chalk and water were continually being sold for milk. Thanks, however, to the invention of the lactometer and the vigilance of the inspector, this practice is not so common as it was. But milk is about the only article of our diet over which a careful watch is kept. To this day an immense quantity of what is called by way of courtesy port wine, is made, and made with impunity, in London. And we are very lucky if we only get worthless ingredients in our diet; we are very lucky if we are not supplied with downright poisons. Poisons are unfortunately so very cheap, and so easily worked up into the semblance of food. If any one discovers that his

marmalade is made of turnips and treacle, he should be thankful it is no worse. For however nasty this composition may be, it is not actually poisonous. The adulterators as a rule supply us with what is positively deleterious. Stilton cheese sometimes grows green, not with age, but by the aid of copper nails. Tea is not unfrequently mixed with a considerable proportion of iron filings, because they are so conveniently heavy. What is euphemistically called butterine has been analysed into Thames mud and pounded stones. It is of course the smaller tradesman who is most tempted to resort to these extreme dodges, and it is therefore the poor who are the worst sufferers from commercial dishonesty in its most disgusting forms. As Tennyson says:—

> "Chalk and alum and plaster are sold to the poor for bread,
> And the spirit of *murder* works in the very means of life."

And you will find the same kind of conduct running through all the trades. You buy a horse. You see, as you think, that he is so many years old; but, poor man! you are taken in. The other day that horse was made to grow a year or two younger in five minutes by the skilful operation of a dentist. You buy a picture which has all the appearance of being ancient. But again you are deceived: this appearance was created a week

ago by a few pennyworths of paint. You buy some silver. It has the mark which stamps it as antique; but that mark is a forgery, and was put on the day before yesterday. You buy a house, which you imagine will be a shelter from wind and rain; but if it is built on nineteenth-century principles—that is to say, of the very worst materials that can by any possibility be made to hold together—by the time your house has "settled," as they call it, there will not be a single window that will shut, nor a single door that will fasten.

Think, again, of the frauds so common on the Stock Exchange. There, as you know, it is a common practice for a man to spread false reports in order that he may further his own speculations. Think of the immense number of persons too respectable to steal, but not too respectable to make purchases for which they have no intention of paying. Think of the enormous amount of crime that has been perpetrated this century in connection with public companies. A very large number of these companies have been begun, continued, and ended in chicanery. Often they could only be started by the publication of that string of lies technically known as "rigging the market"; and the promoters were well aware

that their pockets could only be filled if those of the shareholders were emptied. Thus, on a foundation of falsehood has been based a superstructure of robbery; and when the whole concern falls to the ground, those who are buried in the ruins find out, too late, that they have trusted, not in men, but in knaves.

Sometimes these knaves are diabolical enough to veil their rascality with a hypocritical cloak of canting religiousness. One of the directors of the Glasgow Bank, you remember, was too pious to read Monday's newspaper because it was printed on Sunday. Tennyson, in his "Sea Dreams," has given us a striking sketch of this kind of creature

> "With his fat affectionate smile
> That makes the widow lean. . . .
> Who, never naming God except for gain,
> So never took that useful name in vain,—
> Made Him his catspaw and the Cross his tool,
> And Christ the bait to trap his dupe and fool."

There is nothing in the universe so contemptible as a hypocrite. It is bad to be a knave, but it is infinitely worse to be a pious knave.

The professions, I am sorry to say, cannot by any means be exonerated from the charge of dishonesty. There are doctors who never tell a patient they can make nothing of his case, or that it is one which requires the attention of a

specialist. They would rather kill a man themselves than allow any one else to cure him. There are lawyers who only "rescue your estate from your enemy to keep it for themselves." There are clergymen who talk merely because they are paid to talk, or because they have got into the habit of talking, or because they want to make a name for themselves, and who do not care three straws whether they benefit or injure their congregations.

No doubt this is a glorious era in which we live. In some respects it deserves to be called a golden age. It is an age pregnant with invention and discovery and freedom of thought. But, on the other hand, there never was a time when so many persons lived by cheating. Almost every week we read in the papers of some clever scoundrel who has discovered a new method of getting money by false pretences. It is appalling to think how much mental ability is prostituted in the service of the devil. Few children are so carefully and systematically trained as the children of thieves, who are destined to pursue the dishonourable profession of their fathers. And fraud, as I have intimated, is by no means confined to the lower classes. Of six persons imprisoned the other day for this offence, one was

a barrister and another a clergyman. There was a time when the word of an English gentleman was "as good as his bond"; but that can never be again. There has been too much cheating perpetrated by persons who were gentlemen in virtue of position and education and even birth.

I have dwelt upon dishonesty, because it seems to me one of the most characteristic sins of our day. It springs from that love of money, which may be truly called "the root of all evil,"—that inordinate passion for wealth, which makes men feel that they must and will have it, if not by fair means, then by foul. This delirious thirst for money has never been more general than it is at present. Its pernicious influence may be traced in almost every sphere of life. To say that a thing is not worth doing, and that it will not pay, are nowadays synonymous modes of expression. So, too, a man's value is estimated by the world in pounds sterling. He is "worth" neither more nor less than his balance at the bankers. This insane thirst for money may be seen exercising its baleful influence upon the education of the period. Mr Goschen, speaking a year or two ago to the students of University College, Bristol, made an earnest protest against the tendency to acquire what he called "saleable

knowledge," to the exclusion of that training which would enlarge the capacities of the mind. The protest is much needed. Boys at school, and young men at college, are sorely tempted nowadays to learn only what will pay, and to regard everything as useless if its value cannot be expressed in terms of money. Education ought to mean self-development,—the development of that personality of ours which we believe to bear some resemblance to the Divine. But instead of this, education is too frequently believed to consist merely in the acquisition of the art of money-making. Hence the passion for wealth has led men not only to be dishonest in their dealings with others, but also to be dishonest towards themselves. For a few paltry pounds they barter away the glorious birthright of their manhood. If they can but fill their pockets they are ready to sell their very souls.

There is another characteristic fault of our day, which I can only just mention—the fault, namely, of paying too much regard to appearances, and too little regard to reality. "Strive to be rather than to seem," was a wise and honourable maxim laid down by Æschylus. But the nineteenth-century prophets of expediency have reversed this law. Strive to seem rather than

to be, is the maxim of our time. It is the great aim nowadays to pass examinations, and so to appear clever; to live in good style, and so to appear rich; to conform outwardly to the demands of society, and so to appear respectable. I fear that most of us, in one way or another, are apt to pay more attention to seeming than to being. And what can be more unmanly, what can be more contemptible, than to consider the estimate, the erroneous estimate, of our neighbours, as of more value than the approval of conscience and the favour of God?

I am afraid you will think I have been harsh and severe; but it is a preacher's duty sometimes to speak plainly. I have not spared my own profession; I have no wish to spare myself. I would remind myself, as well as you, that in so far as we knowingly and voluntarily do wrong, either in ways more peculiar to our own age, or in ways common to all ages, in so far as we fail to do right, according to the measure of our light and ability,—we are unworthy of the name of men. A man, properly so called, does not, like a beast, act with a view to the pleasure of the next succeeding moment: he is "a being of a large discourse, looking before and after." A man properly so called does not float upon the waves

of inclination: when they threaten to sweep him from the path of rectitude, he majestically bids them back, saying, "Hitherto shall ye come, but here shall ye be stayed." A man properly so called dares to tread the path of duty, however steep it may be, however difficult, for he perceives that it "leads through darkness up to God."

Do your duty, then, come what may; and believe me, that even here, in the very midst of the darkness and the gloom, deep down in your heart of hearts, there will be peace, perfect peace, the peace of God which passeth all understanding. But—

> "Quit the great ranks of manhood,[1] you will walk
> For ever with a tortured double self;
> A self that will be hungry while you feast,
> Will blush for shame while you are glorified,
> Will feel the ache and chill of desolation
> E'en in the very bosom of your home."

[1] I have taken the liberty of substituting this word for George Eliot's "knighthood."

Christian Manliness.

II.

RIGHT THINKING.

"Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it."—JEREMIAH v. 1.

WE have already noticed the first quality which, according to Jeremiah, is characteristic of every genuine man,—the quality, namely, of executing judgment or doing right. Our business in the present sermon is with the second characteristic attribute of every such man, which is, that he seeks for truth.

We have seen in a previous sermon that truth means either fact, or the harmony between thought and fact, that is to say, knowledge. We have seen that it must be carefully distin-

guished from opinion, and from everything capable of change. Truth is something which is the same for all, whatever be their opinions or absence of opinions. We saw that a creed, even supposing it to be absolutely correct, differs from truth as the part differs from the whole; as the beginning differs from the end; as the starting-point differs from the goal; as the finite differs from the infinite. At the best it is but the A B C of truth. The more extensive is any one's acquaintance with truth, the more clearly does he perceive that what he knows is as nothing, in comparison with what he does not know.

When the Delphic oracle declared that Socrates was the wisest man in Greece, the philosopher said he was at first very much puzzled, for he had a painful consciousness that he was not really wise. He saw afterwards, however, that the wisdom with which the oracle credited him consisted in this: that while, in common with other men, he knew nothing, *he* recognised his ignorance, while *they* prided themselves on their knowledge.

But even those of us who have got so far as to feel that we know very little, are sadly *contented* with our ignorance, are sadly too lukewarm in our pursuit of truth. The very mystery of our

own existence can scarcely arouse us into thought. "We come into this world," says Faraday, "we live and depart from it, without ever thinking how it all takes place; and were it not for the exertion of a few inquiring minds, who have ascertained the beautiful laws and conditions by which we live, we should hardly be aware that there was anything wonderful in it at all." Thank God for those few inquiring minds,—minds that will take more trouble "to win the secret of a weed's plain heart" than most of us would take to solve the riddle of the universe. Should they not shame us into thought?

The power of seeking for truth is, if we only knew it, one of the grandest of human prerogatives. An intuitive acquaintance with everything we ever required to know would have been comparatively worthless. Nothing is worth much to finite beings that has not been acquired by effort. The search for truth is almost, if not quite, as beneficial as its actual acquisition. "If," says Malebranche, "I held truth captive in my hand, I should open my hand and let it fly, that I might again pursue and catch it." "Did the Almighty," says Lessing, "hold in His right hand truth, and in His left hand the search after truth, and deign to tender me the one I might prefer, I

should in all humility, but without hesitation, request the search after truth." These passages perhaps underestimate the value of truth attained. There is an immense advantage and a great joy in the acquisition of fresh knowledge; but still the advantage and the joy I apprehend are due chiefly to the fact, that we are thereby better equipped for continuing our search.

Seeking after truth involves, first of all, the critical investigation of the opinions and beliefs of our ancestors, with the view of ascertaining how far these were correct; and, secondly, it involves the effort to acquire new knowledge for ourselves.

For these tasks we need at once humility and self-respect. Opinions which have been widely and warmly held are not to be hastily rejected. It is sometimes counted an axiom in the present day, that everything old must be bad; whereas, on the contrary, there is really a presumption in favour of the old, which the new can never boast. Nothing can be more disgusting than to see some conceited youth pooh-poohing, without having expended the slightest study upon the subject, opinions and beliefs at which his ancestors arrived, it may be, after months and years of mental conflict, and for which they were

willing to sacrifice their lives. These opinions may be wrong, but they are not to be so lightly set aside; they deserve the most serious and reverential investigation. On the other hand, nothing can be more exasperating than to be told that we are not at liberty to inquire into a subject ourselves, because, forsooth, our ancestors believed that they knew all about it. It is a very common, but a very false argument from analogy, to maintain that our ancestors must have known more than we can know, because they were born before us. But the reason why a father is wiser than his child (if he be wiser) is not, of course, that he was born first, but that he has lived longer, and therefore had more experience. Bacon long ago pointed out, that if he who has had most experience be rightly regarded as the father of him who has had least, then *we* are the fathers and grandfathers of our ancestors, for they had their experience but not ours—we have had the advantage of both. All honour to them for the truths they discovered! All shame to us if we do not discover more![1]

[1] "Truth," says Milton, "is compared in Scripture to a streaming fountain: if her waters flow not in a perpetual progression, they sicken into a muddy pool of conformity and tradition."

Of course there are many subjects in regard to which we are altogether incompetent to form an independent judgment; and in these cases we should thankfully accept the teaching of others. It would be extremely absurd for most of us to question the validity of received astronomical measurements, for we do not possess such a knowledge of mathematics as their legitimate criticism would require. But in regard to theology, the case is somewhat different. "Theology," says Locke, "is a study which is every man's duty." We Protestants believe in the possibility of *direct* communion between the individual and his God. We believe that the teaching of the Spirit is not confined to the schools, but may be enjoyed even by an unlettered peasant. The right of private judgment, that glorious privilege won for us by the Reformation, though often abused, is nevertheless the inalienable prerogative of every human being. Still, even in theology, there is much need for humility. The fact that all men have more or less opportunity of studying it, does not make it an easy science. For instance, to a large number of us the Bible itself, in its original languages, would be a useless book. So far we are manifestly obliged to submit ourselves to the teaching of others. Again, anything

like a comprehensive and consistent interpretation of the Bible demands great learning and ability. And far greater learning and ability still are required for the intelligent and sympathetic study of other religions, without which we cannot understand the full value of our own. It is well, therefore, that we should all find some spiritual teacher to whom we can look up with reverence, as more likely to arrive at the truth than ourselves, and whose opinions will be regarded by us, though not as law, yet with thoughtful respect. We have to beware, on the one hand, of a flippant contempt for authority, and on the other, of a slavish cringing to authority,—

> "Not clinging to some ancient saw,
> Not mastered by some modern term,
> Not swift, nor slow, to change, but firm;"—

firm in our allegiance to the truth; so firm that when we really find an opinion to be erroneous, we shall venture to discard it, no matter whose opinion it may have been.

Preaching, I conceive, has two objects—the one emotional, the other intellectual. The former can only be attained by a direct transfer of feeling from the preacher to the hearer. Unless the audience be made to experience the same sort of

feelings as the speaker, unless there be this contagion of enthusiasm,—the emotional object has not been gained, and so far the sermon is a failure. But it is different with the intellectual result. Though the emotional object cannot be gained without the transfer of feelings, the intellectual may be gained without the transfer of opinions. The hearer may not adopt the preacher's views; he may come to the conclusion that they are altogether wrong; and yet the discourse may have been extremely useful to him. From the emotional point of view, that sermon is most valuable which brings the feelings of the hearers most into accord with those of the preacher. But from the intellectual standpoint, the most useful sermon is not that which gives the hearers the greatest number of ready-made opinions, but that which affords them the strongest stimulus to thought. Preachers are not exempted from the fallibility common to men. It cannot, therefore, be necessary, nor even desirable, that their hearers should always agree with them. "The clergyman said so; therefore it must be true," "I have not been accustomed to think so; therefore it must be false,"—are both erroneous modes of criticism. The illustrious writer just taken from us, affords a striking example of the fact that the highest

usefulness is consistent with a very meagre transfer of opinions. Those who have derived the greatest profit from the writings of Thomas Carlyle are probably those who differ from him most frequently and most seriously. For example all of us, I suppose, disagreed entirely with his theory of hero-worship; the more eloquently he expounded it, the more clearly we saw that he was wrong; and yet all of us are wiser and better for that exposition. It has helped us to more satisfactory views of our own.

There are three things which may keep us from seeking for truth—conceit, laziness and fear. First, there is conceit. Some persons look upon their little stock of beliefs as the sum of human knowledge. Having been providentially preserved from the possibility of error, it is needless for them to test the accuracy of their opinions; and they enjoy a pleasing conviction, as George Eliot says, that if there are any facts which have escaped their observation, they must be facts not worth observing. A search for truth would be of course superfluous on the part of persons so highly endowed. You all know many people of this kind,—people who make a pre-eminent profession of wisdom, but who are pre-eminently fools.

Then there is laziness. You remember the

inimitable description of Cervantes, in which the knight of La Mancha is represented as constructing for himself a helmet. When it was finished the gallant knight smote it with his sword to try its strength. The blow broke it in halves, and so he was obliged to make another. But this time he did not test it; he persuaded himself it was strong enough to render any trial unnecessary. This is an exact illustration of a state of mind that often goes by the name of faith. There are persons who once in their lives tried to think; but when many of their old and long-cherished beliefs began to give way under the process, they desisted, and argued with themselves that thought was unnecessary, or even sinful. You will generally find that if a man is too idle to seek for religious truth, he justifies his laziness by maintaining that such a search is tantamount to scepticism. There is a good deal of indolence in the world, as well as a good deal of stupidity, which is dignified with the name of faith.

Lastly, fear keeps many from seeking truth. Some persons seem to imagine that God will judge them according to the state of their opinions, and not according to the state of their hearts. They imagine that if, in seeking after truth, they were to form an erroneous judgment, they would

be visited with the divine vengeance. Hence they want to receive their opinions—especially their religious opinions—upon authority; for by so doing they think that their own responsibility will cease. Some time ago I met an old friend, who told me he thought of becoming a Roman Catholic. I asked him why. "Well," he said, "I'll tell you. Theology is in such an unsettled condition in my own denomination, that I don't know what I am to believe. One man, for example, teaches the eternity of future punishment; another insists on universalism; and a third maintains the doctrine of annihilation. One man holds the old substitutionary view of the atonement; and another the modern revelatory view. I should like to belong to a Church which would tell me authoritatively what I ought to believe, and then I would believe it." This is not an uncommon state of mind. It has led thousands of men and women to join the Church of Rome.

Now it is quite true that the search for religious truth is a serious and solemn thing; and it is also true that this search often leads men for a time into a very unenviable state of perplexity, uncertainty, and doubt. The old foundations of their existence totter and threaten to fall, and

they feel as if they were sinking, sinking, sinking into the blackness of despair. But such a state of mind, though painful, is neither wicked nor ignoble. "Behold, I go forward," said poor broken-hearted Job,—"Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: on the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him: He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him. But He knoweth the way that I take; when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." If you would see this strikingly fulfilled, read the Life of Frederick Robertson.

The creed which a man accepts merely because he has been told it is correct, and which he has not made his own by thought, investigation and study, is for him a worthless creed. He does not really believe, but merely, as Coleridge puts it, "believes that he believes." Holding his creed in this stupid way, it becomes to him, not (as it should be) a means to progress, but (as it should not be) a barrier against progress. He believes, as he thinks, what he ought to believe; hence he has no anxiety to make any further acquisitions; and even what he thinks he believes has no practical influence upon his life.

The only excuse to be made for such men is,

that they have not known the truth, and therefore they are ignorant what it is they are despising. "Ye shall know the truth," said Christ, "and the truth shall make you free,"—free from such pitiful conceit, free from such contemptible indolence, free from such unworthy fear;

> "For Truth has such a face and such a mien,
> As to be loved needs only to be seen."

He who has once stood face to face with Truth, and gazed upon her matchless beauty, loves her with more than a lover's love, and will not grudge an eternity of effort or of peril, spent in wooing and winning her for his own.

Christian Manliness.

III.

THE VALUE OF MANLINESS.

"Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it."—JEREMIAH v. 1.

I HAVE already mentioned that the word used for man in the Hebrew of our text is a term which stands for a high type of man as distinguished from a low. Some are men in outward semblance only, but the manly man or hero is a man in soul. His character is manly and heroic. According to Jeremiah, he has two distinguishing attributes. 1. He does right. He obeys the dictates of conscience, however strong may be the enticements of expediency or of pleasure; feeling that, "because right is right, to choose the right

is wisdom, in the scorn of consequence." 2. He seeks truth. He does not profess to believe things merely because others believe them. He examines, to the best of his ability, the worth of currently received opinions; and, recognising that his actual knowledge involves but the most fragmentary acquaintance with the truth, he strives diligently and continuously to make further acquisitions. Upon these points I have already dwelt.

Such a conception of manhood no doubt is idealistic. The best of us will sometimes slip. The wisest of us will sometimes feel incapable of mental effort. But it behoves us to ask ourselves whether or not this ideal is our standard of excellence, towards which we are honestly and earnestly doing our utmost to approximate.

It remains now to consider the value of true manliness. I need scarcely say that, from the point of view of political economy, it is a worthless possession, or even worse than worthless. It is not a marketable commodity. It will not increase any one's income, nor improve his position in society. History teaches us that men who have been, in any marked degree, wiser or better than the vulgar herd, have usually suffered in proportion to their superiority. Those to whom Greece was most indebted, for example,

were almost always rewarded with imprisonment or exile or some other form of punishment. Several names will readily occur to you as illustrative of this—such as Cleisthenes, Miltiades, Themistocles, Aristides, Cimon, and Pericles. You may remember, too, the well-known couplet,

> "Seven cities quarrelled over Homer dead,
> Through which the living Homer begged his bread."

While he was alive people thought his effusions amply repaid by a beggar's crust; but when he was dead they fought for the honour of calling him fellow-townsman. If this is not historically true in regard to Homer, it may nevertheless be regarded as a figurative biography of the world's greatest men. Their greatness was rarely recognised till long after they were gone; or if it were recognised, it elicited envy rather than admiration, punishment rather than reward. The nearer men have approached to the lofty ideal of manliness described in our text, the more loyal they have been in their devotion to right and to truth, the more, generally speaking, have they been called upon to suffer. "A noble nature," observes Goethe, "can only attract the noble." We may even go further, and say, a noble nature repels, and excites the animosity of, the ignoble. It may seem cynical to assert that the majority

of mankind have always had degraded conceptions of human duty; but it is demonstrably true, proved by the fact that real nobility of character has almost invariably cost a man very, very dear. Unflinching devotion to right and truth has led to ignominy and persecution, to the loss of pleasure, property, freedom, life. It is scarcely a poetical exaggeration when James Russell Lowell speaks of

"Truth for ever on the scaffold, wrong for ever on the throne."

The world—that is to say, the ignoble many as opposed to the noble few—the world approves of doing right up to a certain point, up to the point of expediency; but there it stops. To go beyond this, to be honest when honesty is not the best policy, it considers a sign of lunacy. Even to-day, in civilised and Christian England, a tradesman whose code of morals is that which is technically called commercial, will not respect an apprentice who refuses to tell a useful lie; he will despise and dismiss him. Similarly, the man or woman who persistently discouraged scandal would most probably be regarded as a bore.—The world, again, approves of seeking after truth up to a certain point; it has no objection to the investigation of nature so far as such a

pursuit is likely to increase capital or to raise rate of profit. But that is all. It despises facts which cannot be turned to pecuniary account. It never seeks after truth in the moral or religious sphere, and it hates all who do. It believes that it knows everything worth knowing, everything necessary for its present and future salvation. It dislikes being disturbed with new ideas. There has been no prophet, nor apostle, nor philosopher, nor reformer whom it has not execrated, against whom it has not howled out the accusation which the Ephesians brought against St Paul, that the world was being turned by him upside down. The very truisms of one age were often regarded in the preceding generation as impious blasphemies, justly punished by fines and imprisonment, by torture and death:—

> "For all the past of time reveals,
> A bridal dawn of thunder-peals,
> Whenever thought hath wedded fact."

Let me recall to your minds one or two familiar illustrations. Anaxagoras, after the early Greek philosophers had long groped in vain for a First Cause, saw and said that the origin of all things must be ultimately traced to Intelligence. This his countrymen could not tolerate; it was too novel, too absurd. Private judgment must be punished

when it wandered far from the truth; so he was banished from Greece, and had a narrow escape of death. Socrates, whose conceptions of Deity were too lofty to tally with the childish orthodoxy of his contemporaries,—Socrates, who was brave enough to express the memorable utterance, "I will venture to be true to my conviction, though all the world oppose it,"—Socrates, the purest, wisest, noblest of men, was accused, forsooth, of being an atheist and of corrupting the young, and was despatched with a cup of hemlock. Galileo, for saying that the earth moved, was tortured into perjury.[1] The world, I am sorry to say, was in this instance represented by a section of the Christian Church. Giordano Bruno, one of the subtlest thinkers of the middle ages, suggested the hypothesis that our world was not the only abode of life in the universe; and for this he was burnt at the stake; "for the maintenance of the Holy Church, and

[1] After preaching this sermon, I was favoured with an indignant and anonymous note, to the effect that "every student of history" was aware that Galileo was not tortured. Every student of history is doubtless aware that Galileo was not put upon the rack. But to say that the pressure which was brought to bear upon him, and which ended in his recantation, did not cause him torture, is to say that there is no such thing as *mental* suffering.

the rights and liberties of the same." Think, too, of the thousands and tens of thousands of less celebrated martyrs, who have proved the beauty of truth and the divinity of right by the eloquent testimony of anguish; who, because they refused to be false to their convictions, had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment; who were stoned, or sawn asunder, or slain with the sword; who dwelt in deserts and in mountains, in dens and caves of the earth; being destitute, afflicted, tormented. Lastly and chiefly, call to remembrance how the world treated Christ. In Him the ideal of manhood was completely realised; on Him, therefore, the world inflicted its most cruel vengeance, and against Him it directed its vilest blasphemies. You know His character: I need not describe it. Pure, unselfish, noble as was His own life, He was full of tenderness and helpful sympathy for the sinful and fallen and debased. Yet He was almost universally hated. He was hated by the Pharisees because He had shown the worthlessness of their broad phylacteries and long prayers and orthodox platitudes, the worse than worthlessness of their lying, canting hypocrisy. He was hated in the end by the common people, when they found that,

notwithstanding all His kindness, He was not likely to improve their social condition. As soon as they made this discovery, Christ ceased to be a favourite with them. With the usual fickleness of the mob, they suddenly transferred their enthusiasm. "Not this man, but Barabbas," they shouted. "Now Barabbas," as the evangelist sarcastically adds, "was a robber." For once high and low, rich and poor, priest and layman, patrician and plebeian, educated and unlettered, the man of culture and the boor,—for once these were all agreed. They were unanimous in taking away the life of Him who had made it possible, by His teaching and example, for all future lives to become noble and sublime.

"Enough! high words abate no jot or tittle, of what while life still lasts will still be true.
Heaven's great ones must be slandered by earth's little: and God makes no ado."

You and I, however, are not likely to suffer death or torture for fidelity to conscience or to reason. Things have so far improved that we shall probably, by such fidelity, meet with sympathy that will be unspeakably precious and helpful. Still, if we are unswervingly noble, if we lift up our voice against fraud and cant, if we choose to be singular and unfashionable rather

than false to our convictions, if we always and everywhere prefer right to wrong, truth to error, God to mammon,—we shall certainly, sooner or later, and to a greater or less extent, have to suffer for so doing. We shall lose money, it may be, or forfeit esteem, or terminate old friendships, or injure our prospects. That we do not suffer more, will be due to the sacrifices of the noble men and women who have gone before us, and, above all, to the one prolonged sacrifice of the life and death of Christ. And surely we shall not grudge to offer our own oblation of anguish upon the altars of right and of truth.

The value of manliness, then, does not consist in its conferring any pecuniary or social advantages. He who would be a true man must be willing, if necessary, to dispense with these. Its real worth is twofold. First of all, it entitles us to self-respect; and any evil which the world can inflict is insignificant, when compared with this privilege which it cannot take away. There can be no sweeter experience than the knowledge that we have done our best to be true to ourselves, to walk worthy of the manhood with which we have been endowed. But, secondly,—and this is the point suggested by our text, a point on which, I am sure, Christ would have us lay stress,—the

value of manliness consists, not in what we gain by it for ourselves, but in what we give by it to others. "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see if ye can find a man, one that doeth right and seeketh truth; and I will pardon it,"—pardon thousands of human beings who might have been men but were not, for the sake of one who was really a man. Now, since pardon would be immoral, and therefore impossible, without genuine repentance, the divine forgiveness, to which the prophet refers, must imply that the one true man would, by his conscious and unconscious influence, gradually convert the other inhabitants of Jerusalem or their descendants from the error of their ways, and induce them also to be loyal to right and truth.

What! you say, one man do all that! Yes; if he be a man—why not? We are inclined very much to underrate the power which every human being possesses over the future of his race. There must be some whom each of us can directly influence. Every one of these will, in his turn, exert a similar influence upon several others; and the descendants of all these, to the end of time, will be the better for every effort we have made to be true to the nature with which we have been endowed. "We see human heroism," says George

Eliot, "broken into units, and we say this unit did little—might as well not have been; but in this way we might break up a great army into units; in this way we might break the sunlight into fragments, and think that this and the other might be lightly parted with." The number of true men is on the increase, and they are more and more tolerated, not to say respected, by the rest of their fellow-creatures. So it seems but reasonable to look forward to a final victory in the far-off future for right and for truth. And each one of us may contribute something to this glorious consummation. "There needs not a great soul to make a hero," says Carlyle; "there needs but a God-created soul, which will be true to its origin." As surely as every ray of light has a tendency to dissipate darkness, or every grain of salt to prevent corruption, so surely does every good action we perform confer some blessing upon our race. Here there is no such thing as failure. Apparent failure is often the most splendid success. It was, pre-eminently, in the case of Christ; it is so oftentimes, in some measure, in the case of His followers. Martyrdom, since it is the sublimest testimony to the value of right and to the beauty of truth, martyrdom is not defeat—it is victory.

To be a man is no easy task, I admit. The constant doing of what is right implies continual self-denial, than which there is nothing in the world more painful. The earnest search after truth implies hard thinking; and I know of nothing that requires a greater effort. It is because true manliness is so difficult of attainment that it is so rarely attained. "Nothing great is easy," says Plato. "All noble things are rare," says Spinoza; "all noble things are difficult." There is this for our consolation. Indifference to right and truth, though they would save us trouble, would assuredly degrade our nature; whereas the pain we may experience in trying to live a manly life is noble and elevating in itself, and will lead to our ultimate perfection.

Let us remember, however, that we shall never succeed without the strength that comes from communion with God.

"O God, our spirits, *unassisted*,
Must unsuccessful be.
Who ever hath the world resisted
Except by help of Thee?
But, saved by a divine alliance,
From terrors of defeat,
Unvauntingly, yet with defiance,
One man the world may meet.

My soul is for a crown aspiring—
The crown of righteousness ;
My soul is for the truth inquiring—
For God, and nothing less.
Sin, sorrow, and the world conspiring,
Assault me, and I bleed.
Tired am I : yet, through love untiring,
I know I shall succeed."

Do not sell your birthright for a mess of pottage. What shall it profit you if you gain the whole world and lose *yourself?* Sirs ! I beseech you, for your own sakes, for Christ's sake, for God's sake, be men !

Science and Religion.

I.

PRAYER.[1]

"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."—PHILIPPIANS iv. 6, 7.

THIS, and one or two similar passages of Scripture, have given rise to a celebrated misrepresentation of Christianity. "Be careful for nothing," "take no thought for the morrow," &c., were alleged by Strauss, Buckle, and others, as proofs that the New Testament is opposed to industry and commerce. It was further maintained that the world could do better without Christianity than without commerce; and we were therefore advised to discard Christianity as

[1] Upon this subject see also 'Defects of Modern Christianity and other Sermons,' pp. 177 and 247-259.

a thing of the past, opposed to the better instincts and wiser reflections of the nineteenth century. But a glance into your Greek Testament—nay, a little common sense—will suffice to show you that this objection to Christianity is utterly without foundation. When Christ tells us to "take no thought for the morrow," it is plain, from the word used in the Greek, that He is warning us, not against prudent, but against *anxious* thought. If a man insures his life, though he is in one sense taking thought not only for the morrow but for an event that may not happen for thirty, forty, fifty years, yet he is in no way violating Christ's commandment; he is performing a duty which necessarily follows from the golden rule. So in regard to our text, "Be careful for nothing" might be better rendered, "Be not anxious about anything." It is the same word that is translated elsewhere, "take no thought." And without consulting our Greek Testaments, we might surely have guessed that the active, earnest, energetic, hard-working Paul was not exhorting us to apathy, to indolence, to a care-for-nothing-and-nobody state of mind. On the contrary, the freedom from anxiety which he commends to us, is the essential condition of true work. There is nothing more enervating than worry.

Now, according to the apostle, we are to get rid of anxiety, and so to be prepared for successful work, by means of prayer. "Be careful for nothing: but . . . let your requests be made known unto God." In this sceptical age, however, when the very foundations of our faith are being shaken, it is somewhat difficult to believe in the efficacy of prayer. The opinion is becoming general that answers to prayer must be impossible, inasmuch as they would imply violations of natural law. But this difficulty may, I think, be at once removed. Let us ask ourselves what we mean by a law of nature. What do we mean, for example, when we speak of the law of gravitation? Why, simply, that all bodies or particles of matter in the universe attract one another, and so tend to come together. But mark you, though they *tend* to come together, this can be prevented. Suppose your child is leaning from a window at the top of the house, and that he leans a little too far, loses his balance, and falls out. Gravitation will inevitably and remorselessly drag him to the ground unless some one interferes. But if you see his danger, and rush forward and catch him, he will be saved *in spite of gravity*. That law has not been violated; it is still acting, still tending to drag the

child downwards: but you have *counteracted* it. You, who were born yesterday and will die to-morrow—you, with your puny strength, have got the better of a force that is perhaps as old as eternity and as infinite as the universe.

There is another point I should like you to notice. The unchangeableness of these laws is the very quality that enables us to counteract them. If we could not depend upon the way in which any force was going to act, we should not know with what other forces it might be resisted. Take the case of lightning. We know that a lofty building has a tendency to attract electricity from a thunder-cloud. We also know that some metals are good conductors. Hence we attach metallic rods to every valuable structure, so that the electricity may be conducted thereby into the ground, instead of lingering about the edifice and destroying it. But if the laws of electricity were changeable,—if, for example, the same metal was sometimes a conductor and sometimes a non-conductor,—we should be altogether helpless. It is only when we foresee precisely the effects of natural forces, that we understand what to do if we wish to counteract them. As the Duke of Argyll says in his 'Reign of Law,' "It is the very inviolability of these laws which makes

them subject to contrivance through endless cycles of design. How imperious they are, yet how submissive! How they reign, yet how they serve!"

This word law, therefore, is not such a bugbear as it looks. It does not prevent us from accomplishing our purposes and plans; and if *we* can frustrate the natural tendency of natural forces by the introduction of other forces, why cannot God do the same? Between law and prayer there is not the slightest incompatibility. Answers to prayer would be impossible in a lawless chaos, but they are perfectly natural, or at any rate conceivably possible, in a universe governed by unchanging laws. In so far as God's knowledge and power are greater than our own, He will be able to achieve what it is impossible for us to effect. Well, then, supposing we are in any trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or other adversity, from which we are unable to extricate ourselves, God *could perhaps* deliver us from it, without any violation or violent rupture of the laws of nature, but merely in virtue of His superior knowledge of those laws, and His superior power of wielding, combining, and adapting them.

But further—and this is the point I want you

specially to notice: The end and use of prayer is not to bring God's will into harmony with ours; it is to bring our wills into harmony with God's. When we pray for the good things of this life, we know not what we ask. We may be praying for what cannot possibly be granted, consistently with the welfare of others, or even with our own. Juvenal said to the Romans, in one of his Satires, "You pray for money and children and long life, forgetting that you may unknowingly be praying for curses instead of blessings. Why do you not, he asks, "pray the gods to give you what they see to be best?" The old Roman satirist had more faith in heaven than most of us. We *say* often enough, "Thy will be done;" but we do not mean it. And it is not words that constitute prayer. "My words fly up" (says the King in 'Hamlet')—

> "My words fly up, my thoughts remain below;
> Words, without thoughts, never to heaven go."

"The peculiar significance of prayer," says Principal Caird, "lies in this, that therein we rise above ourselves; we leave behind the interests that belong to us as creatures of time; we enter into that sphere in which all the discords and evils of the world possess no more reality than the passing cloud-shadows that lie beneath our

feet." Do you know what it means, "Thy will be done"? It means this: Send me wealth or poverty, friends or enemies, health or sickness, success or failure, bliss or anguish, life or death, as seemeth best unto Thy godly wisdom. Is there one of us who has ever said that in his heart of hearts? Is there one of us who could honestly kneel down and say it now? Yet that is what we ought to feel, that is what we ought to mean, every time we say "Thy will be done."

This view as to the true purpose of prayer is brought out strikingly in our text. The apostle does not say, "Let your requests be made known unto God, and your requests will be granted;" but, "Let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds."

Here lies the answer to Professor Tyndall and others, who some time ago proposed to test the efficacy of prayer by a series of scientific experiments. A hospital was to be taken and divided into two sections: the one was to contain patients who prayed and were prayed for; the other was to be restricted to patients for whom no prayer was offered; and then it was to be noticed whether or not the recoveries were more numerous in the former case. But those who made

this proposal forgot that prayer may be answered by mental peace as well as by bodily health, by a translation to heaven as well as by a prolongation of life. If all those who prayed died, and all those who did not pray recovered, the efficacy of prayer would not be disproved. Hezekiah prayed to be restored to health, and "there were added to his life fifteen years." Solomon prayed for wisdom, and he became wise. St Paul prayed thrice that his thorn in the flesh might be removed, but the answer he received was, "My grace is sufficient for thee." And he was perfectly satisfied. "Most gladly, therefore," he says, "will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

We find it so difficult nowadays to believe in anything unless it can be seen or touched or weighed. But before we venture to say that a man's prayer has been unavailing, we should be quite sure of one thing, that there has not come to him, in answer to it, a divine, ineffable peace, which passeth all understanding, and therefore passeth all your scientific tests. I have known men and women pray year after year for blessings which they never received; but I have never known them pray without receiving the answer of peace. This is the only answer to

prayer which the Bible always and under all circumstances guarantees; and it is an answer that will not always be detected by the curious experimenter. We read of men, ay, and even women, who were seen to smile amid their martyr flames—

> "And lift their raptured looks on high,
> As though it were a joy to die."

To a superficial observer they may have appeared to be in a sorry plight; but they were in the enjoyment of a peace which they would not have exchanged for all that the world calls good.

The apostle says we should make known our requests "in everything," or upon every occasion, unto God. The life we are obliged to live may sometimes appear to us paltry and contemptible. But since it is the life which God has ordained for us, there must be a sublimity in it after all, such as to render it worthy of His regard. It is the ever-recurring little troubles that do most to mar our happiness; and these, therefore, are pre-eminently fit subjects for prayer. But let us try and remember that the Great Father knows far better than we do what we really need,—what we should really desire if we saw things as He alone can see them. We look at our lives from the low standpoint of to-day, and we consequently get

but a blurred and partial view of them. God regards them from the lofty standpoint of eternity. Hence it is no wonder that His ways with us are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts. We have all probably yearned for something, which we afterwards discovered would have been most injurious. We have all probably had occasion to thank God that He did not grant our requests; and it is oftentimes a matter for equal thankfulness that our requests *on behalf of others* have been denied. Those who were honoured with the friendship of the illustrious statesman whose death we are still deploring,[1] doubtless offered up many fervent prayers that his life might be prolonged; and yet it seems to me that it was better for him that these prayers should not be answered. The words which he put into the mouth of the hero of his last romance, were true in a most remarkable degree of himself. "All I have desired," says Endymion, "all I have dreamed of, has come to pass." But greater, perhaps, than any achievement of his life was the "peace with honour" which came to him in death,—the enthusiasm of sympathy manifested by the whole nation, from her Majesty the Queen

[1] This sermon was preached on the Sunday after Lord Beaconsfield's death.

down to the prattling village child. If he had been spared, it is simply impossible that, at his advanced age, and after so serious an illness, he could have been again quite what he once was; the rest of his life would have been an anti-climax. And the world very quickly forgets. So that, if Lord Beaconsfield had died ten years hence, the homage paid him by the nation at large would undoubtedly have been less. Those who loved him best, therefore, those who miss him most, will, I feel sure, after the keenest paroxysms of grief are past, rejoice for his sake that their prayers were not answered; that he did not outlive himself; and that the marvellous triumphs of his life were at once surpassed and completed by the still more marvellous triumph of his death.

The fact that we are never willing to allow our loved ones to go from this world to a better, is just an illustration of the general truth, that we are constantly forming erroneous opinions as to what would be good for ourselves and for them. These opinions, we are frequently enabled to rectify even in this life. But if we should be called to go down to the grave with some desire unfulfilled, let us try to look forward with a sure and certain hope to the time when we shall see,

in our Father's more immediate presence, that He has been making all things, even our unanswered prayers, to work together for our good. Let us endeavour to say with Faber—

"I worship Thee, sweet Will of God,
And all Thy ways adore;
And every day I live I seem
To love Thee more and more.

I love to kiss each print where Thou
Hast set Thine unseen feet:
I cannot fear Thee, blessed Will!
Thine empire is so sweet.

Ill that God blesses is our good,
And unblest good is ill;
And all is right that seems most wrong,
If it be His sweet Will."

Science and Religion.

II.

THE SUPERNATURALNESS OF NATURE.

"Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire."—2 KINGS vi. 17.

THE distinction commonly made between the natural and the supernatural, though useful and convenient for certain purposes, becomes misleading and false, if understood to mean that a hard and fast line can be drawn between the two, or that the one necessarily excludes the other. They are in reality always combined. It is possible to see the unseeable. What is invisible to the bodily eye may be plain enough to the mind or to the heart; and thus the apparently bare mountain is often discovered to be full of horses and chariots of fire. If we do not find

something supernatural in the commonest objects and phenomena, it must be—not because there is nothing supernatural in them, but because our own vision is defective. Of many a man it may, alas! be said—

> "A primrose by a river's brim
> A yellow primrose is to him,
> And it is nothing more."

But there are others who know from their own experience the force of the profound words of Tennyson:—

> "Flower in the crannied wall
> I pluck you out of the crannies;
> Hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
> Little flower: but if I could understand
> What you are, root and all, and all in all,
> I should know what God and man is."

To the vulgar man, matter is but another name for dirt: to the man who is a physicist and only a physicist, it is a curious combination of atoms; but to poets and philosophers it is the Shechinah of infinite mystery. The following hints may perhaps help you to see that the conception of poets and philosophers is alone adequate and correct.

There is a line of argument I should like to take up, which, I am afraid, however, is too long and too difficult for a sermon, and which

I will therefore only mention. Hegel, the prince of thinkers, has shown that matter can neither be known nor conceived of except as permeated through and through with thought; and he has thus for ever precluded any one from being a materialist, who will take the trouble to master the first principles of his philosophy.[1]

But leaving this, let us look at our subject from a simpler and more popular point of view. There is a class of thinkers in the present day who persist in talking as if naming a thing, and telling us a little about it, were equivalent to giving its complete explanation, and removing from it every vestige of mystery. But this short and easy method of annihilating the supernatural is altogether unwarranted. Let us take an illustration. The force of gravity is probably, of all natural phenomena, the one with which science has made us most familiar. She has given us in regard to it what, at first sight, may seem a comprehensive and final account. We know that this force is not confined to our own world or to our own time, but that it is at work in distant planets and in still more distant stars, and that its operations must have continued for millions and millions of years.

[1] See 'Agnosticism,' *passim.*

We know, too, precisely the law of this attractive influence which material bodies exert on each other—viz., that it varies directly as their mass and inversely as the square of their distances. By means of this intimate knowledge we are able to explain the motions and positions of the heavenly bodies, we can foretell the return of comets that have not been visible for generations, and predict, centuries beforehand, the time when eclipses may be expected, almost to the fraction of a second. So that if science has seen through anything, if it has mastered anything, if it has exorcised the supernatural from anything, it must have seen through and mastered and exorcised the supernatural from the phenomenon of gravitation. And yet, after all, if we think a little longer, we shall see that even in this case science has but revealed the magnitude of a mystery which remains, as of yore, insoluble. Think how much is yet untold. We may ask, Whence comes that force? Is it older or younger than the particles of matter in which it acts? Or is it coeval with them? Is it something separable from them? Or is it part of their very essence? What makes it act as it does? Will it always act thus? Is it connected, and if so how, with mind and will? These are questions which we

cannot answer; upon which, at any rate, physical science can throw no light. And this is but an illustration of what seems to me universally true. If we look long and earnestly into the commonest natural object or phenomenon, we shall by and by begin to perceive a supernatural mystery, before which we shall be humbled and amazed.

Again. The feelings excited in us by natural scenery are quite incompatible with the supposition, that there is nothing in it but a mere fortuitous concurrence of atoms. Physical science can neither explain nor explain away the fact that Nature, besides producing impressions on our senses, appeals to our minds and hearts. "Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language; their voice is not heard. Yet their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world." Nature, the uncrowned queen of song, is continually producing poems that need not "the din of words." With her silent eloquence she makes us now pensive and now glad; she arouses our hopes and excites our fears; she inspires us with yearnings after the Unseen and Eternal. You remember Wordsworth's lines,—

"I have learned
To look on Nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth. . . .
. . . . . .
I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts: a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things."

Call it what you will, name it how you please, men of all creeds, and men of no creed, have felt this mysterious presence. It cannot possibly be explained by any mechanical play of atoms; but it is none the less real for that. It is as much a fact as electricity or heat. Its existence is proved by its effects. A German writer, Lotze, who is no less versed in physics than in metaphysics, truly says that science can never give us the whole of what is to be said about the universe, it can but give us the smaller half. "Above and beneath and around the bit of nature which we can weigh and measure and dissect and fit into our formulæ, there is a region which is for us the realm of wonder." The mechanical action and reaction of material atoms

is but one phase of the universe. There is in addition something that leads to art and poetry and religion. To ignore this is to ignore what is highest and best.

The design, meaning, and purpose which can be detected in Nature afford the most striking instances of its supernaturalness. I can but allude to them at present. In another sermon I shall endeavour to show, that these evidences of a Mind and Will underlying Nature have not been nullified by modern discoveries or theories.[1]

Let me call your attention to one other point. We are apt just now to underrate, or even to ignore altogether, the mystery of *ourselves.* There is a danger of our being led to believe, not only that mystery has been exorcised from the external world, but that we ourselves have been likewise reduced to the level of commonplace machines. Owing to the triumphs of physiology, there is a growing inclination to think that the nerves and brain are everything,—that there is no need for a mind, or soul, or ego. But if this view be examined, it will be seen that it is pre-eminently absurd. It may be true—it probably is true—that our sensations, thoughts, and volitions, are preceded, accompanied, and followed by

[1] Pp. 271-282; and 'Agnosticism,' *passim.*

molecular changes in the nerve-fibres; but these *material* disturbances of the nervous system do not *themselves* feel or think or will. They are not conscious of themselves; and therefore they cannot in the least degree do away with the necessity for a sentient, percipient, intelligent mind. This has been sometimes acknowledged even by writers of the Positive school, like John Stuart Mill and Professor Tyndall. You may follow up nervous vibrations to their last flutter in the brain, but the material flutter is not consciousness, bears not the slightest resemblance to consciousness, throws no light whatsoever upon any of the phenomena of consciousness. So that physiology in reality can do nothing more than lead us up to the mystery of mind; it can neither explain that mystery nor explain it away.

In addition to the common consciousness of our everyday working life, there are also inner recesses of consciousness (so to speak) which can be even less explained, if that were possible, by the methods and formulæ of physics. We sometimes experience such an awe, such a faith, such unutterable yearnings, such an agony of grief, such a rapture of hope, as may alone suffice for proof that we are some-

thing more than, something other than, dust. "So long," says Ruskin, "as you have that fire of the heart within you, and know the reality of it, you need be under no alarm as to its chemical or mechanical analysis. The philosophers are very humorous in their ecstasy of hope about it, but the real interest of their discoveries in this direction is very small to human kind. It is quite true that the tympanum of the ear vibrates under sound, and that the surface of the water in a ditch vibrates too; but the ditch hears nothing for all that, and my hearing is still to me as blessed a mystery as ever, and the interval between the ditch and me quite as great. If the trembling sound in my ears was once of the marriage bells which began my happiness, and is now of the passing bell which ends it, the difference between those two sounds to me cannot be counted by the number of concussions. There have been some curious speculations lately as to the conveyance of mental changes by brain-waves. What does it matter how they are conveyed? The consciousness itself is not a wave: it may be accompanied here and there by any quantity of quivers and shakes of anything you can find in the universe that is shakeable. What is that to me? My friend is

dead, and my—according to modern views—vibratory sorrow is not one whit less, or less mysterious, than my old quiet one."

The attempt, then, to ignore the supernatural is most unphilosophical. But we are so terribly afraid nowadays of being over-credulous. We should remember, however, that believing too much is not the only sign of a weak mind. We may show our mental incapacity by believing too little. He who regards a human being as a mere mass of nerves, he who maintains that there is nothing in Nature but a mechanical combination of atoms,—must be a very superficial thinker. The chemical analysis of a tear into oxygen, hydrogen, chlorine, and sodium is not a complete explanation of the mystery of grief: nor is the supernaturalness of Nature disproved by the fact that it cannot be depicted upon the retina of the eye. It may be discovered by the mind: it may be felt by the heart. Let us search diligently until we find it. "When thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him, if thou shalt seek Him with thy whole heart."

"God's in matter everywhere:
Flower, bird, beast, and man and woman,
Earth and water, fire and air,
All divine is all that's human.

Only matter's dense opaqueness
  Checks God's light from shining through it ;
And our senses (such their weakness)
  Cannot help our souls to view it,
Till *Love* lends the world translucence :
  Then we see God clear in all things.
Love's the new sense, Love's the true sense,
  Which teaches us how we should call things."

Science and Religion.

III.

THE NATURALNESS OF THE SUPERNATURAL.

"The Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."—JAMES i. 17.

IT is interesting and suggestive to observe how, with the progress of science, our notions of the universe have been revolutionised. Once men believed in the universal reign of caprice; now they believe in the universal reign of law. Formerly earth and air and sea were peopled with a host of imaginary beings, and the human race was supposed to be at the mercy of their changeable whims or of their unchangeable vindictiveness. It was thought that any one of them, if strong enough to prevail over the rest, might alter the course of nature at a moment's notice. Religion, therefore, consisted in appeas-

ing these divinities, so powerful for evil, with barley, wine or blood. In the darkness of an eclipse, in the rolling peal of thunder, in a volcanic eruption, in the devastation of a plague, and even in an unusual state of the weather, men saw, as they thought, the capricious interference of these supernatural powers. But observation and reflection have made us wiser. The more that Nature has been investigated, the more has her uniformity been brought to light. Resemblances have been discovered even where they were least expected; as, for example, in the similarity of structure belonging to animals of different species, which at first sight appeared to be altogether diverse. And not only has Nature been discovered to be uniform in our own time and in our own world, but the most remote spheres and ages, regarding which we are able to gather any information, have been found to be subject to the same laws which obtain here and now. We know beyond a doubt that the force which causes a leaf to fall to the ground is concerned in the revolutions of the most distant star; that "the law which moulds a planet rounds a tear;" and that the light of to-day has exactly the same properties as the light of the pre-historic world. So certain are we of the

universality of law, that we know *apparent* exceptions cannot be real. In fact, a seeming violation of law has not unfrequently led to a fresh confirmation of its absolute inviolability. For example, the fact that Uranus did not move in exact accordance with astronomical calculations, suggested that there must exist somewhere a disturbing cause. The amount of divergence from the calculated path pointed to the exact spot where that disturbing cause must be looked for; and there, accordingly, Adams and Leverrier (almost simultaneously) discovered a new planet, —the planet which is now called Neptune. Even in cases where, owing to the complexity of the problem, our knowledge is less exact, even where we have not been able to ascertain the precise manner in which certain results are produced, — we yet feel absolutely sure that these results are brought about by unchanging and unchangeable laws. Epidemics of cholera and plague, for instance, which our ancestors attributed to the anger of heaven, we believe to be due to a violation of the laws of health; we no longer connect them with a sudden interference of Providence, but we set about tracing them to impure water, or to some other equally simple and natural cause. And similarly in regard to

the weather, though it is the very type of fickleness, and though our knowledge of the laws which govern it is exceedingly imperfect, yet there is not an educated man in the world to-day who does not feel certain that rain and drought, heat and cold, good seasons and bad, depend upon laws as stringent and immutable as those which determine the planetary motions. In a word, to us in this nineteenth century the universe is essentially and pre-eminently a universe of order and of law.

Now it is on this ground that so many persons object to what is called supernatural religion. To them Christianity appears a sort of chaos, where chance and disorder and irrationality reign supreme. I wish to point out to you that this notion of Christianity is not correct. I wish to call your attention to the reign of law in the religion of Christ; or, in other words, to the naturalness of the supernatural.[1]

And first of all, with regard to the general subject of miracles. To any one puzzled about this matter, I would recommend the Duke of Argyll's 'Reign of Law,' and Butler's 'Analogy' (part II. chapter iv.) Butler there points out that our knowledge of Nature and her laws is ex-

[1] See note, p. 173.

tremely limited and partial. We know scarcely anything of the laws of tempests, earthquakes, famines, pestilence; or of the laws regulating the respective capacities of the individual. The forces by which many things of great importance happen are so unknown to us, that we call their results accidental. In fact, we only *guess* that the whole course of nature is capable of being reduced to general laws; we do not know it. We have found it to be so with a part, and we imagine, therefore, it must be so with the whole. On the supposition, then, of a God, wiser and more powerful than ourselves, there is room for any number of interpositions, which, from our human point of view, may seem unnatural, but which are nevertheless in perfect harmony with laws more general and comprehensive than those we have hitherto discovered. Let me give you an illustration. As water cools, it contracts and grows heavier, till it has reached a temperature of about forty degrees Fahrenheit. Then it suddenly proceeds in an exactly opposite manner, and any further cooling makes it expand. Now, if our observations and experiments had always been made at temperatures higher than forty degrees, or if they had always been made at temperatures lower than forty degrees, however

numerous these observations and experiments had been, they would not have led us to the complete law. You remember how well this idea is put in 'Sartor Resartus.' "To the wisest man, wide as is his vision, Nature remains of quite infinite depth, of quite infinite expansion; and all Experience thereof limits itself to some few computed centuries and measured square miles. The course of Nature's phases on this our little fraction of a Planet is partially known to us: but who knows what deeper courses these depend on; what infinitely larger Cycle (of causes) our little Epicycle revolves on? To the Minnow, every cranny and pebble and quality and accident of its little native Creek may have become familiar: but does the Minnow understand the Ocean Tides and periodic Currents, the Trade-winds and Monsoons and Moon's Eclipses; by all which the condition of its little Creek is regulated, and may, from time to time (*un*miraculously enough), be quite overset and reversed? Such a minnow is Man; his Creek this Planet Earth; his Ocean the immeasurable All; his Monsoons and periodic Currents the mysterious Course of Providence through Æons of Æons."

So much for the abstract possibility of miracles. Now let me suggest to you, in the briefest pos-

sible manner, the naturalness of three of the most fundamental doctrines of Christianity—viz., prayer, the Atonement, and immortality. In a previous sermon, I pointed out to you that belief in the efficacy of prayer did not involve any belief in the violability of natural laws.[1] The same experience, which has taught us that these laws are unchangeable, has also taught us that they may be counteracted. We dissipate cold by lighting a fire; we prevent our buildings from being destroyed in a thunderstorm by means of lightning conductors; we avoid a sunstroke by retiring into the shade; and so on, and so on. It is a matter of common observation, you see, that the tendency of natural forces can be naturally counteracted, by the judicious introduction of other forces. Well, then, supposing we are in any trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or other adversity, from which we are unable to extricate ourselves, God *might* conceivably deliver us without any violent rupture of law, but merely by a supernaturally skilful combination and adjustment of natural forces. I pointed out to you, however, that after all the end and use of prayer was not to bring God's will into conformity with ours, but that it was intended, on the contrary, to bring our wills

[1] Pp. 238-9.

into conformity with God's. The apostle does not say, Let your requests be made known unto God, and your requests will be granted; but, "Let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds." It might be impossible, even for Omnipotence, to grant our requests, consistently with the welfare of others, or even consistently with our own. Hence the only answer to prayer which the Christian religion always guarantees is the answer of peace. And if there be in the universe a Mind and Heart superior to our own, the very effort that we make in prayer to realise His existence and to submit ourselves to His will must, *naturally* and *inevitably*, lead to peace. Now, I ask, is there anything chaotic, lawless, disorderly, or irrational in such a doctrine of prayer?

Secondly, look at the Atonement. So far from the sufferings of Christ having been arbitrarily inflicted by a capricious and revengeful God, they are the most striking exemplifications of a universal law. When we were considering the Mystery of Suffering, we saw that no character could be perfected except through the instrumentality of sorrow. The painful battling with difficulties develops strength, self-reliance and self-respect. Moreover, pity, mercy and

the spirit of self-sacrifice can only exist in beings who have been called upon to suffer. It was a matter of common experience, we found, that suffering is needful for moral perfection. Now, according to the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the anguish of the Man of Sorrows is an exemplification of this universal law. "It became Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." In other words, God Himself could only bring about the salvation of men, by making even Christ, their leader and example, perfect through that very discipline of sorrow which we have seen reason to believe is always necessary for the formation of a noble character. Christ is no exception to the reign of law. He is the most remarkable example of its absolute universality.

Thirdly, I think we may see that even the doctrine of immortality is an instance of the naturalness of the supernatural. Though our sensations and thoughts and volitions may be always preceded, accompanied and followed by changes in the nerves, those mental states themselves are totally different from any neural process. As Aristotle and Plato long ago explained,

it is not our eyes that see, nor is it our ears that hear; it is *we* that see and hear *by means* of those organs: they are but the instruments of the mind. If you take away a man's telescope, you deprive him of that kind of vision which a telescope affords. Similarly the destruction of the eye by death is the destruction of common sight. But there is no more reason in the one case than in the other to suppose that the mind which sees is thereby destroyed. And since we have not the remotest idea of the nature of the connection between mind and body, since we cannot, for example, conceive how it is that an impression on the retina produces in us the sensation of sight,—there is nothing to prevent our supposing that the mind could perceive without material organs, or, at any rate, by means of organs altogether different from those with which it is at present provided. As Bishop Butler says, "It is not even probable that the mind has any kind of relation to the body which it might not have to any other foreign matter formed into instruments of perception." So far, negatively, the doctrine of immortality is not unnatural. But further, positively, the indivisible conscious mind (whatever it may be or may not be) cannot conceivably be the same thing as the divisible

and unconscious brain. Its power of self-determination proves that it is not a mere passive recipient of sensations. It is evidently an *active* principle, and in some way or other an originative, creative centre of force.[1] Hence it follows that the doctrine of immortality accords with the universal law of the conservation of energy, according to which we know that forces, though they may pass from one form into another, are never absolutely destroyed. There would manifestly be a violation of this law if the mind were annihilated when the body was dissolved by death.

Let me press upon your careful and protracted consideration the line of thought which I have endeavoured to open up in this and the preceding sermon. Those persons who have chosen to style themselves—with more assurance than accuracy—"exact thinkers," want to persuade us that the physical methods of investigation can fathom nature to its very deepest depths; that everything which those methods fail to discover should be considered non-existent; and above all, that the doctrines of religion are superlatively

[1] The proof that the ego must be something different from the brain I have attempted to develop in my Essay on 'Personality,' and in 'Agnosticism,' pp. 1-60.

absurd. The natural they regard as the realm of light, in which wise men dwell; the supernatural they look upon as the region of darkness, into which fools and fanatics are prone to wander. But we have seen (have we not?) that the natural and supernatural are really inseparable. On the one hand, if we look deeply enough into nature, we come to something which, though it can be detected neither by the microscope nor by chemical reagent, we are nevertheless compelled to recognise as *real*. When our eyes are opened, the mountain, which once appeared bare, is seen to be full of horses and chariots of fire. In other words, the natural is essentially supernatural. Again, if we carefully examine the fundamental doctrines of religion, we do not find, as the exact thinkers say we must find, disorder, lawlessness, and chaos. We discover, on the contrary, that these doctrines, if properly understood, are in perfect harmony with our common everyday experience. In other words, the supernatural is essentially natural. The God of creation is the God of redemption: and with "the Father of lights" there is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

Science and Religion.

IV.

THE ARGUMENT FROM DESIGN.

"He maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flaming fire;" —*or rather it should be rendered*, "He maketh the winds His angels, and flaming fires His ministers."—PSALM civ. 4; HEBREWS i. 7.

IN the present day, a large number of scientific men maintain that the appearance of design in nature is an appearance only, not a reality. This view is supposed to be established in two ways,—first, by the general doctrine of the universal reign of law; and secondly, by the particular theory of Evolution.

Let us look for a moment at the argument drawn from the universality of law. The regularity of nature is supposed by many to disprove the existence of God, or at any rate to disprove the religious doctrine that God is the King of

Nature. Now, in the first place, I may remark that law is a very misleading word. It is generally printed with a capital L, which gives it a more imposing appearance than it justly deserves. Law only means invariable sequence. A law of nature is merely the fact that certain causes produce certain effects,—that certain antecedents are always followed by certain consequents,—that under the same circumstances the same events will always happen. You will sometimes hear it said, the universe is governed by laws. The universe is *not* governed by laws. It is governed *according* to laws, but no one can suppose that the laws make themselves; no one can imagine, for example, that water determines, of its own accord, always to freeze at one temperature and to boil at another, that snowflakes make up their minds to assume certain definite and regular shapes, or that fire burns of malice aforethought. The sequences of nature will not explain themselves. The regularity of nature, therefore, needs to be explained. It cannot explain itself, nor can it disprove the existence of a controlling Will.

I have pointed out to you more than once that the reign of law does not hinder us in the accomplishment of our human purposes and plans.

On the contrary, the immutability of the laws of nature is the "very characteristic which makes them subject to contrivance through endless cycles of design." Writers of the Positive school often speak as if we were completely the slaves of nature's laws. Professor Huxley, for example, says, "The progress of science in all ages has meant the extension of the province of what we call matter and causation, and the concomitant banishment of what we call spirit and spontaneity." But the Professor admits, in so many words, that man is "capable within certain limits of self-adjustment;" and every one knows that man is capable, within certain limits, of adjusting external forces. Hence it is undeniable that there *is* such a thing as human spontaneity. Now this power of initiating, controlling, and modifying events is the most important of all our faculties. If, therefore, the progress of science has consisted in throwing this fact of spontaneity into the shade, so much the worse for science.

Since, however, physicists have often forgotten their own freedom and spontaneity, it is scarcely to be wondered at that they have ignored the divine. "Nowadays," says Comte, "the heavens declare no other glory than that of Hipparchus,

Kepler, Newton, and the rest, who have found out the laws of their sequence." Comte assumes, you see, that the sequences cannot possibly have had a cause. But to treat this as an axiom is the very acme of illogical flippancy. True, there is no sign of anything approaching to fickleness or caprice in nature. True, the many gods of fetishism have been annihilated by scientific investigation. But the same unity and harmony, which prove that there are not many wills, go far to show at the same time that *there is one.* The cosmic results of the combined operations of natural forces testify to some unity of design and purpose. Nothing can be (on the face of it) more absurd than Comte's theory, that an irregular and disorderly system of nature would require a supernatural explanation, but that a regular and orderly system requires none. To say this, is to maintain that God could only be manifested by the attributes of fickleness and impotence. If He were always interfering with things like an operative in a mill, who has constantly to stop his machinery to join a broken thread, if Nature were so paltry a system, that God had continually to interpose in order to rectify her defects,—then He would be recognised. But His existence is denied, forsooth, because it is not revealed by

failures and mistakes. Unless method and regularity be proofs of irrationality, the reign of law does not compel us to reject the evidence of design in nature. Law means, as we have seen, nothing more than an orderly sequence of events. The question will always arise, Why is the reign of law productive, on the whole, of order, harmony, and beauty? The only reign of law incompatible with volition, would be the reign of the law of chaos. We ourselves are constantly using the forces of nature, controlling them, adapting them, and making them subservient to our purposes and desires. And since these forces, when free from human control, continue working together for good, since their united effect is to produce a cosmos, an order of nature, a system of things in which it is (generally speaking) desirable to live, the only reasonable conclusion—the only conclusion warranted by experience—is that they are connected with a supernatural mind and will. Since "the voice of law is the harmony of the world," there is strong ground for the presumption that "her seat is the bosom of God."

So much for the objection drawn from the general doctrine of the reign of law. Secondly, let us look at the bearing of the particular theory

of evolution upon theology. I might premise that this theory cannot be considered proved except so far as species are concerned;[1] and that no less eminent an evolutionist than Mr Wallace refuses even to admit that it will account for man. But, we will suppose, for argument's sake, that, even in its most comprehensive shape, the doctrine has been proved true; we will imagine it to be a demonstrated certainty that vegetable, animal, and even human life, have been evolved from some primordial germ or germs, originally latent in a fiery cloud; and that the development of higher from lower forms of existence is sufficiently accounted for by natural selection,—by the fact, namely, that the less desirable forms have an inherent tendency to give place to the more desirable. If we grant all this, what follows? What is the effect upon our theology? Why, simply that a certain mode of statement of a certain argument of Paley's is seen to be unsound, and this unsoundness had been already recognised on other grounds. Paley maintained that every definite organ and portion of an organ throughout the world is specially, by a particular creative fiat, adapted to a certain end; just as every portion of a watch implies a special con-

[1] See 'Agnosticism,' p. 83.

trivance on the part of the watchmaker. But this, as every one now knows, is completely disproved, by the existence in most animals of rudimentary and abortive organs, which are evidently not adapted to any end: as, for example, the rudiments of fingers in a horse's hoof; the teeth in a whale's mouth; or the eyes in an unborn mole, which, though perfect in themselves to begin with, dry up before they can be used. But though we no longer profess to trace divine design in every minute fraction of an organism, this does not hinder us from seeing it in organisms regarded in their entirety, and in Nature considered as a whole. Professor Huxley imagines, however, that he has ousted us from this second position. He maintains it to be conceivable that a watch might be made without contrivance. "Suppose," he says, "that any one had been able to show that the watch had not been made directly by any one person, but that it was the result of the modification of another watch which kept time but poorly; and that this, again, had proceeded from a structure that could hardly be called a watch at all, seeing that it had no figures on the dial, and the hands were rudimentary; and that, going back and back in time, we came at last to a revolving barrel, as the

earliest traceable rudiment of the whole fabric. And imagine it had been possible to show that all those changes had resulted, first from a tendency in the structure to vary indefinitely, and secondly, from something in the surrounding world which helped all variations in the direction of an accurate time-keeper, and checked all those in other directions,—and then it is obvious that the force of Paley's argument would be gone. For it would be demonstrated that an apparatus, thoroughly well adapted to a particular purpose, might be the result of a method of trial and error, worked out by unintelligent agents, as well as of the direct application of the means appropriate to the end."

Very good. But whence came that "tendency in the structure to vary," and that "something in the surrounding world"? The "agents" may be "unintelligent"; but the method of their working implies that they are directed and controlled by intelligence. *When we consider their results*, we are forbidden, both by experience and by reason, to suppose that their combined working is the effect of chance. The further back you trace their operation, the greater becomes the necessity for connecting them with an intelligent mind; since the longer you suppose them to have

been at work, the less likely does it become that their rational results can be the effects of irrationality. If two things by their interaction, extending over long periods of time, produce progressive results, the only legitimate hypothesis is that they were *intended* and *adapted* for that purpose. So that, after all, the watch made according to the ingenious theory of the professor has not been produced without design. He has got rid of one kind of contrivance only by substituting another.

Professor Huxley's argument has been parodied in this way. Two ignorant men might have a controversy as to the origin of a bronze statue. Says the one, "He must have been a great sculptor who made that statue." To this the other replies, "You are quite wrong, my friend; no sculptor ever touched that statue. I saw it made myself. I saw the metal, a formless molten mass, flow out of the furnace into the sand, and then in a while come out, as you see it, a bronze statue. It was not the sculptor who made the statue, but the sand. There was first a tendency in the molten metal to vary indefinitely; and secondly, there was something in the surrounding sand that helped all variations in the direction of a beautiful statue, and checked all those in other

directions. The result is a statue made, not by contrivance, but by natural selection." The answer to this is of course very simple. The molten metal and the sand, the tendency in the structure to vary, and the something outside the structure helping one kind of variation and checking other kinds, were intended and adapted to work together for the production of the statue. Natural selection is but a form of contrivance.

The doctrine of the survival of the fittest does not account for the fact that there are fittest to survive. It does not, in other words, explain the existence of organisms, nor the existence of any measure of adaptation between the organism and environment. It merely explains the method according to which this adaptation has been increased. The purpose which, from the days of Anaxagoras, has been more or less observed in nature is not proved to be no purpose, because it is accomplished by means that work together systematically and unchangingly. Evolution does not disprove a Designer; it only proves that he works in a different way from that which had formerly been supposed. There is no reason why things may not be made *for* their circumstances, though they are partly made *by* them. Till it has been *proved* that the working together

of internal and external relations, so as to accomplish a progressive result, is *not* due to design, we are compelled to suppose that it *is*. The fact that natural forces work together regularly and methodically does not prove that they have no master—it suggests rather His absolute control. The fact that lower forms of existence are continually evolving higher, need not prevent us from recognising God in nature. On the contrary, this eternal evolution of the more desirable from the less cannot be logically accounted for, except on the ground that it is effected by infinite power and wisdom and skill. The atheistical argument is most illogical. In human affairs and in human works, we never—except within very narrow limits—find order or progress, harmony or adaptation, due to anything but design. To assert, therefore, that these attributes of Nature are the result of chance, is to maintain a hypothesis which is not only unwarranted, but which is absolutely contradicted, by experience. On the other hand, the argument from design is a strictly logical argument. I believe that my neighbour is a personal, free, intelligent being like myself, because of the consistency and purpose manifested in his words and deeds. The fact that the forces of Nature

produce their results according to an absolutely unchanging method, leads inevitably to the conclusion that they are connected with a Will, in whom there is neither variableness nor shadow of turning, and who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Further, when we remember that each one of these forces, if it worked irregularly instead of regularly, would be capable of throwing the entire universe into confusion, we are confirmed in our conviction that the world in which we find ourselves is not the production of a fortuitous concurrence of atoms, but that there is a Being working through all atoms and forces everywhere, who loves beauty, harmony, progress and joy, "who maketh the winds His angels, and flaming fires His ministers."[1]

[1] For a fuller treatment of the connection between Evolution and Design, see my volume on 'Agnosticism.'

Science and Religion.

V.

THE VISION OF GOD.

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."
—MATTHEW v. 8.

I APPREHEND that Christ was referring as much to our present as to our future life, when he uttered these words. Let me direct your attention to one phase of the subject—viz., to the vision of God which exists for us in Nature.

There are three distinct kinds of sight. There is, first of all, physical sight, which depends chiefly on bodily organs, and which merely enables us to distinguish material objects from one another. Then, secondly, there is mental sight—the sight of the scientist and the poet. This faculty helps men to discover analogies and resemblances and connections between dissimilar

and distant things; and hence it gives rise to the metaphors and similes of poetry, and leads to the discovery of the laws of nature. It was the faculty of mental vision, for example, which led to the establishment of the widest scientific generalisation, by suggesting to Newton that perhaps the earth might exercise the same influence of attraction upon the moon, which it did upon a falling apple. Then, thirdly, there is spiritual sight, which belongs to the metaphysical philosopher and to the man of faith. Spiritual vision enables men to "see Him who is invisible,"—Him who is unseeable by either the first or the second kind of sight.

We may call these powers of vision, if we please, the sight of the body, mind, and spirit respectively. Of course this is only a rough classification. Strictly speaking, even in the first case, it is the mind that sees, and not the bodily eye. Still, for the lowest kind of vision there is needed only such an exercise of mind as is possible for a brute. Again, in our present state of existence there is no such thing as purely spiritual sight. Our materials, or some of them, must be received through the senses. If we are spiritually to see God in nature, it is necessary that we, first of all, physically see nature itself. "That is

not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual." And, once more, you must remember the distinction between mind and spirit does not imply two separate entities, but only distinct faculties in the one indivisible man. The mind stands for the lower intellectual faculties, such as imagination or reason, the spirit for the higher, such as faith and the religious affections. With these qualifications, we may, if we please, talk of the three kinds of sight as bodily, mental, and spiritual, remembering that these adjectives refer only to the most striking *factor* in the process of vision in each particular case.

Now not one of these three faculties of sight is used by any of us as much as it should be. Even the first and simplest kind we often allow to lie dormant, though it requires no more exertion than to open our eyes and look about us. I remember noticing on a summer's evening at an English watering-place, while the spectacle of one of the most glorious sunsets ever seen was being unfolded on the horizon, there were a number of persons sitting on the promenade *with their backs to it.* That is the way in which nature's beauty is not unfrequently ignored. "Men have eyes, but they see not."

The second faculty of sight is still more neglected by most of us, for this requires not only that we use our eyes, but that we think about what we see. We might know a great deal more about Nature's ways than we do, we might decipher for ourselves some of her unspoken poems, — if we would use our mental vision. But, as Carlyle says, "We have to regret not only that men have no religion, but that they have no reflection. They go about with their heads full of mere extraneous noises, with their eyes wide open but visionless,—for the most part in the somnambulist state." And I think that the diversity between men, in regard to their scientific or poetic insight into nature, does not depend upon a difference in their ability, so much as it does upon their greater or less industry and application. No man was ever a poet or a discoverer without an effort proportionate to the greatness of his achievements. Why, genius itself has been defined as patience; and patience is, at any rate, its most important constituent. Intellectual vision requires a determined effort—ay, thousands of determined efforts—to think. We must "interrogate nature," as Bacon puts it —that is, we must inquire carefully into the causes and effects and uses and meanings of the

phenomena taking place everywhere around us. And we might all do this if we would. It is quite true that "the eye can only see what it brings with it the power of seeing." But it is also true that the power which it brings with it may be intensified by practice. Even our physical faculty of sight (as I have called it) can only be developed by experience. Those of you who know anything of psychology, or have read Berkeley's 'Theory of Vision,' will understand what I mean. All that you actually see at any moment is but a little flat patch of colour on the retina of your eye. What you *seem* to see —namely, such and such an object at such and such a distance—is an inference. The correctness of such inferences is due to the constant and lifelong practice you have had in drawing them. This practice is forced upon you by the common experiences of life. But the development of mental vision requires not only long-continued involuntary practice, but long-continued voluntary effort. The greatest living orator, who is remarkable for the number and force of the illustrations with which his subject, whatever it may be, is embellished and elucidated, has told us that in the beginning of his career he had great difficulty in finding illustra-

tions at all. He acquired the faculty merely by determining that he would acquire it. I venture to say that there is not one young man now present who might not, before he died, discover something in nature, either after the manner of the scientist or of the poet, which has never yet been seen, and which the world would be much the better for knowing, if only he would take the trouble to look for it.

Similarly, in regard to spiritual vision, we all have the capacity within us—latent if not developed. This kind of sight Christ teaches us depends on pureness of heart. A pure heart, I take it, is one that is not entirely consecrated to the acquisition of pleasure, or money, or fame, or any other form of self-seeking,—a heart that is not altogether set upon self-gratification,—a heart "at leisure from itself," and so at leisure to seek for God.

Some of you may be inclined to ask, How is it, then, that modern scientists find the vision of God in nature so blurred and indistinct? They are certainly not selfish pleasure-seekers or money-makers. They are for the most part disinterested and enthusiastic seekers after truth. But to them, generally speaking, the Deity is an unknown God. Yet others far less gifted than

they, and not more unselfish, have "seen the King in His beauty," and while they traversed the mazes of this present world, have felt their hearts "burn within them" as He talked to them by the way. I think the chief reason is this. Just as the body may be *over-trained*, and its powers developed to the injury of the mind, so the mental faculties may be over-educated,—educated, that is, at the expense of the spiritual. This has been the case, it seems to me, with a good many modern physicists. Their whole lives are spent in weighing, measuring and analysing things, so that they feel hopelessly lost in regard to subjects which do not admit of such treatment. There are not many of them, I admit, who would make such a foolish remark as that of Lalande: "I have swept the heavens with my telescope, and have not seen God,"—a remark which would equally disprove the existence of gravitation. It is a popular error to suppose that Huxley, Tyndall, Darwin, Spencer, Virchow, and others are atheists. They are nothing of the kind. They think, however, that we can know little or nothing about God, inasmuch as we cannot discover anything by means of the ordinary scientific methods. They forget that these methods equally fail us in examining a human

character. *That* can be investigated neither by microscope nor telescope, neither by scales nor chemical tests, and yet it can be known. Just as some theologians have been one-sided in refusing to accept the ascertained facts of science as the very truth of God, so many modern scientists are one-sided in over-estimating the power and scope of the physical methods of research. It is a pity that they should make this mistake; but still it is not altogether surprising. "Let him among you that is without sin,"—who is quite sure that all his faculties are developed in due proportion,—"cast the first stone."

Still, though I am not desirous of condemning those who have failed to see the vision of God, I am anxious to point out to you that this vision really exists, and that it has been seen by many in all its mysterious grandeur. It is useless to say that those who see it, or think they see it, are mere visionary fanatics, whom too much or too little learning has made mad. For it has been seen by such men (to take only three examples) as Goethe, Carlyle, and Tennyson. You may remember the Earth-spirit in 'Faust' says—

> "Thus at the roaring loom of time I ply,
> And weave for God the garment thou seest Him by."

That is Goethe's idea of Nature. It is "the gar-

ment of God." Again, Carlyle says in 'Sartor Resartus,' "This fair universe, even in the meanest province, is in very deed the star-domed city of God. Through every star, through every grass-blade, the glory of a present God stills beams." And Tennyson, in yet more eloquent language, says—

"The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills, and the plains,
Are not these, O soul, the vision of Him who reigns?

Earth, these solid stars, this weight of body and limb,
Are they not sign and symbol of thy division from Him?

Speak to Him, thou, for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can meet.
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet."

Well, then, this vision, since others have seen it, may be seen by you and me. Let us look for God in the future more earnestly than we have done in the past,—look for Him in vineyards and orchards and harvest-fields,—in the bright plumage of birds, and the delicate bloom of fruit, and the sweet gracefulness of flowers,—in the dense foliage of the forest, and the sparse heather of the moor,—in the rich luxuriance of fertile valleys, and the rugged grandeur of the everlasting hills,—in the merry dance of the rivulet, and the majestic tides of the ocean,—in the gay

colours of the rainbow, and the quiet splendour of the starry heavens,—in the gentle radiance of the moon, and the gorgeous light of setting suns, —in the clear azure sky, and the weird pageantry of clouds,—in the snow-mantled wintry landscape, and the brilliant effulgence of a summer's noon, —in the virgin loveliness of spring, and in the pensive fading beauty of autumn;—let us look for Him with an earnest, eager, and unwearied gaze, till we see Him to be a God of wisdom as well as power, of love as well as sovereignty, of beauty as well as glory.

The Divine Fatherhood.

"Our Father."

"IF there were no God," said Voltaire, "it would be necessary to create one." By this, I suppose, he meant that men must have some object of worship; that they cannot avoid forming a conception of the Being, or Cause, or Force—however they may please to term it—which they regard as the one great fact of the universe. The impossibility of dispensing altogether with religion was strikingly illustrated by Comte, the author of the Positive Philosophy. He rejected what he considered the fiction of a god, but supplied its place by the abstract idea of humanity, which he called the *Grand Être*. The cultus which he instituted in honour of this conception involved a doctrine of immortality, the practice of prayer, as well as other religious observances, and, above all, it included the

tyranny of a despotic priesthood, who were to determine not only what common people should believe, but also the subjects with which thinkers and scientific investigators should be occupied. The religion of Comte has been well described by Professor Huxley as "a sort of Roman Catholicism *minus* Christianity."

The human heart, at any rate in its quieter and more sober moments, when it is resting from the rush of life, craves and demands a God. The universality of this yearning has been forcibly described by Max Müller in his lectures on the Science of Religion. "There was in the heart of man from the very first a feeling of incompleteness, of weakness, of dependence, of whatever we like to call it in our abstract language. We can explain it as little as we can explain why a newborn child feels the cravings of hunger or of thirst; but it was so from the first, and is even so now. Man knows not whence he comes, and whither he goes; he looks for a guide, a friend; he wearies for some one on whom he can rest; he wants something like a Father in heaven. In addition to all the impressions he receives from the outer world, there is a stronger impulse from within; a yearning for something that should not come and go like everything else;

that should be before and after, and for ever; that should hold and support everything; that should make man feel at home in this strange universe."

We are likely to forget the debt of gratitude which we owe to Christ for having revealed to us the doctrine of our text. The conception of the Fatherhood of God may seem a simple and natural idea, that might have easily occurred to any one. But this is not the case. History, and still more philology, show how hard and how long men struggled unsuccessfully to find a word which would fitly express, and an emblem which would worthily symbolise, the Deity. Max Müller has pointed out that the name of sky has been chosen for this purpose, at one time or other, by almost all nations. We have examples of this in the Roman Jupiter, and in the Greek Zeus. But he asks, "Was the sky the full expression of that within the mind which wanted expression? Far from it. The first man who, after looking everywhere for what he wanted, and who at last from sheer exhaustion grasped at the name of sky as better than nothing, knew but too well that, after all, his success was a miserable failure. The sky was no doubt the most exalted, the only unchanging and infinite

being that had received a name, and that could lend its name to the—as yet unborn—idea of the Infinite, which disquieted the human mind. But the man who chose the name could not have meant that the visible sky was all he wanted, and that the blue canopy above was his God." This was the best, however, that could be done in the days of the world's infancy. Age succeeded age, and thinker followed thinker; men still yearned to comprehend the Being from whom their life was derived; but they could not even guess what His nature must be in order to satisfy the longings of the human heart. The Athenians, you remember, erected an altar, with the inscription, "To the unknown God." They could not name him; they did not try to do so. They felt that every word which suggested itself was inadequate, misleading and false. The Christian idea of the Fatherhood of God had never occurred even to such a poet as Plato. We find from the Old Testament that it had now and again flashed through the minds of one or two of the most spiritual of the Jewish seers. And we find, too, in studying philology, that the idea had suggested itself to our old Aryan ancestors in prehistoric times.[1] But this, notwithstanding, we may safely

[1] See 'Defects of Christianity, and other Sermons,' p. 183.

say, that the conception was never fully *realised* or *developed* before the time of Christ.

I have no intention in this sermon of attempting to prove the legitimacy of the idea—that is to say, its conformability with reason. I will merely suggest to any one who may doubt this conformability, that there is nothing in Nature to contradict it. True, our own world has in it a vast amount of suffering, but still it has in it a much greater amount of joy. This is clearly and dispassionately argued in one of John Stuart Mill's posthumous essays.[1] It is also forcibly stated in Lewis Morris's exquisite poem entitled "Evensong":—

"Pain comes, hopeless pain, God knows, and we know, again and again;
But e'en pain has its intervals blest, when 'tis heaven to be free from pain.
And I think that the wretch who lies, pressed by a load of incurable ill,
With a grave pity pities himself, but would choose to have lived it still:
He pities himself, and yet knows, as he casts up life's chequered sum,
It were best on the whole to have lived, whatever calamity come.

[1] This argument in Mill's mouth is doubly powerful, because he was naturally inclined rather to pessimism than to optimism.

And the earth is full of joy. Every blade of grass that springs;
Every cool worm that crawls, content as the eagle on soaring wings;
Every summer's day instinct with life; every dawn when from waking bird
And morning hum of the bee a chorus of praise is heard;
Every gnat that sports in the sun for his little life of a day;
Every flower that opens its cup to the dews of a perfumed May;
Every child that wakes with a smile, and sings to the ceiling at dawn;
Every bosom which knows a new hope stir beneath its virginal lawn;
Every young soul ardent and high, rushing forth into life's hot fight;
Every home of happy content, lit by love's own mystical light;
Every worker who works till the evening, and takes before night his wage;
Be his work a furrow straight down, or the joy of a bettered age;
Every thinker who, standing aloof from the throng, finds a high delight
In striking, with voice or with pen, a stroke for the triumph of right;—
All these know that life is sweet, all these with a consonant voice,
Read the legend of time with a smile, and that which they read is 'Rejoice.'"

Since then the pain and sorrow of our world seem to be more than counterbalanced by its pleasure and its joy; since, moreover, we know that suffering is *sometimes* productive of good,

and do not know but that it may be always productive of good, it follows that the idea of the Fatherhood of God is a conception which, to say the least of it, cannot be disproved by any of the facts of experience.

Our text embodies the most fundamental, the most comprehensive, doctrine of Christianity; and no system of theology can lay claim to any value which does not start from this point. Oliver Wendell Holmes tells us that, when asked by some one what was his creed, he replied, "The first two words of the paternoster." Those who think that his answer indicated a feeble faith and a contracted belief do not know the meaning of the words—our Father. They are pregnant with significance. Some persons are afraid that if the love of God be too much insisted upon, there is a danger of His justice being ignored. They seem to imagine that if we too often speak about the Divine Fatherhood, it will be forgotten that punishment must follow sin. Now there could not be a greater mistake. All the more important practical doctrines of Christianity inevitably follow, and can be easily deduced, from the statement that God is our Father; whereas the systems of theology which have started from God's sovereignty, or omnipotence, or justice, have

never reached His love. The only thing they have recognised under that name is so limited, so capricious, and so unreasonable, as to be altogether beneath contempt. Instead of representing God's tender mercies as "over all His works," they have made Him care only for a few, and for these few simply in order that by them His own isolated glory might be promoted. From a narrow conception like that of justice, it is impossible to deduce a broad conception like that of love. To make the attempt is like trying to extract the whole from the part, the greater from the less. On the other hand, we can scarcely fail to see that the idea of justice follows necessarily from that of love,—is, in fact, included in it. A father worthy of the name must evidently be just—that is, must deal with his children according to their deserts. Similarly, from the fact of punishment we cannot prove love; for punishment may be inflicted out of hate: but love necessarily involves the possibility of punishment. A father worthy of the name must punish his children when their welfare demands this discipline. The doctrine of God's Fatherhood, then, does not destroy any wholesome dread of retribution. On the contrary, the very intensity of the Infinite Father's affection makes it certain that no sin will

be overlooked, but that every delinquency will be followed by the consuming fire of suffering, in order that the sinner himself may, if possible, be made perfect. So that you see the broad idea of Fatherhood necessarily involves the narrower ideas of justice and of punishment.

After all, however, the fear of punishment, though a help to right-doing, is not the only, nor is it the greatest, help. We may be terrified away from the bad, but we may be also attracted and charmed towards the good. "If for every rebuke," says Ruskin, "that we utter of men's vices, we put forth a claim upon their hearts; if for every assertion of God's demands from them, we could substitute a display of His kindness to them; if side by side with every warning of death we could exhibit promises of immortality; if, in fine, instead of assuming the being of an awful Deity, which men are sometimes unable to conceive, we were to show them a near, visible, all-beneficent Deity, whose presence makes the earth itself a heaven, I think there would be fewer deaf children sitting in the market-place." Ruskin is right. Men may be more easily drawn than driven. Even punishment itself, when it is seen to proceed from love, becomes attractive,—irresistibly attractive. But unless, or until, this

origin can be discovered for it, it may have a hardening rather than a subduing influence. Strong, brave, high-spirited men will be inclined to resist, even unto death. It is impossible

> "*By tyrannous threats to force them into faith.*"

According to the old classic legend, when Jove seemed to be hurling his thunderbolts in a tyrannical and unjust fashion, the Titans endeavoured to scale heaven and wrest them from his grasp. So it will ever be. Supposing that the strongest Power in the universe were not good but evil, not God but devil, there would always be

> "Souls who dared look the Omnipotent Tyrant in
> His everlasting face, and tell Him that
> His evil is not good."

Those who are endowed with true nobility of soul will be but little influenced by fear. But if you can bring to bear upon them motives of admiration, of gratitude, of affection, you may do with them almost what you will. Hence a belief in the Fatherhood of God is the strongest and the best stimulus to right-doing.

The words of our text involve almost the whole of practical religion. It is impossible to overrate the value of the work which succeeds in instilling them into young minds and hearts,

not as a dead intellectual dogma, but as an active principle, permeating the whole of life. In the heyday of youth and health and pleasure, men may feel self-sufficient; they may not recognise their need of the Infinite Father. But they will not always be young and well and happy, and what then? What then? As Burns truly says—

> "When ranting round in pleasure's ring,
> Religion may be blinded;
> Or if she gie a random sting,
> It may be little minded.
>
> But when on life we're tempest-driven,
> And conscience but a canker,
> A correspondence fixed with heaven
> Is sure a noble anchor."

There will come to many of the children now in our homes and schools, seasons of affliction, when they will be well-nigh crushed beneath the burden of life, when its dull monotony or poignant anguish will make them yearn for the rest and peace of death. There will come to most of the children of the rising generation, seasons of fierce mental conflict, and dense spiritual darkness, when they will feel painfully conscious of the mystery of existence, and painfully unconscious of any satisfactory solution for the mystery. Faith for them, believe me, will be no easy

matter. Scarcely a week will pass but they will read in some newspaper or review ingenious and powerful attacks, not only upon orthodoxy, but upon religion in general,—not only upon Christianity, but even upon theism. They will not be able, like so many of their predecessors, to believe that they believe everything which has been handed down to them upon authority. In the agony of scepticism many of them may be driven for the moment to think, with Schopenhauer, that the universe is an egregious blunder, that life is a horrid mockery, that there is nothing desirable but annihilation. We tremble as we picture to ourselves the voyage of these little ones over life's wild waste of waters. Yet we need not despair. We, too, perhaps have been overtaken by the same terrible tempest, and enveloped in the same blackness of darkness. Through the storm, however, there have come echoes, faint but passing sweet, of the music of our childhood. There have thrilled through us memories of the time when we were first taught, by the lips of some gentle teacher, to say, "Our Father." And we have taken courage; hoping even against hope, that after all there may be a meaning and a use in our calamity, that the tempest may be but wafting us more swiftly to

a desirable haven, that the darkness may be but the prelude of dawn. We have been enabled to say with poor broken-hearted Job, "Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: on the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him: He hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him. *But He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.*"

O blessed memories of childhood's most precious lesson! Let us do what we can that they may be the heritage of the rising generation.

Eternal Life.

(EASTER-DAY SERMON.)

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life."
—REVELATION ii. 7.

"SHOW me," says Fichte, "what thou truly lovest, show me what thou seekest and strivest for with thy whole heart, and thou hast thereby shown me thy life. This love is the root and central part of thy being. What thou lovest is that thou livest." This remark of Fichte's is very true. Different men have different notions as to what constitutes a desirable existence. Every one has, consciously or unconsciously, formed some ideal of life, for the realisation of which he thinks it worth his while to strive.

There goes a man shabbily dressed, looking very anxious and careworn. He is hurrying on at a great pace, but suppose we stop him and say,

"Sir, what is life?" "What is life?" he replies; "why, life is money. I toil and scheme for it day and night. I am worth a good deal already. I may one day be a millionaire. That is my fondest hope. Then I might truly say I have lived." With this short but pregnant reply he hastens on his way.

He has no sooner gone than we meet a young man, faultlessly attired, with a remarkably handsome, and still more remarkably vacant, countenance, lounging slowly along, looking unutterably bored. Let us ask him the same question. "Life," he replies, "is pleasure. Man's chief end is to enjoy himself. Philosophers, poets, statesmen, philanthropists, scientists, all earnest thinkers and workers,—I look upon either as drudges to be pitied or as fools to be despised. I go in for enjoyment. I have broken my mother's heart; I have sent my father in sorrow to the grave; I have ruined scores who were fools enough to trust in me. I wish there were more pleasure than there is to be thus obtained. It is much less than it ought to be. Still it is the only thing worth living for. To continue in this course as long as possible is, I believe, to make the best use of my existence." With these remarks he leaves us and saunters on.

We next encounter a placid-looking couple, man and wife. There is nothing at all noteworthy in their appearance. They would seem to be moderately well to do, and in all other respects very much like a great many other couples. To our question, "What is life?" the gentleman replies, "Why, the proper way to live is to take things easy. It is not worth while to aim at being very rich—this would require too much exertion. It is not worth while to seek after enjoyment. It is better to be contented with what the gods send. Look at me. I make a pretty good income without any trouble. I never do what I dislike doing, with the exception of going to church on Sunday morning; and that is an *unavoidable* annoyance—

> 'At church on Sunday to attend
> Will serve to keep the world your friend.'

Of course I never think—thinking is troublesome, and does not pay. My actions and opinions are all that can be desired, for they are just like those of my neighbours. My outward conduct is always irreproachable; my opinions are always orthodox." Here the lady chimes in and says, "Yes, and we hate enthusiasm; enthusiasm is so vulgar. It disturbs the delicious calmness

of a well-regulated existence. We live in a delightful, half-conscious dream."

We allow these good people to pass on, and to relapse into their usual state of semi-consciousness. Then we espy a man with a well-shaped head, and a quick, eager, penetrating glance. We put to him our old question; we tell him the answers we have already received; and we ask him if he agrees with any of them. "No," he replies; "ten thousand times no. Money is mere dross. Pleasure is but vanity. An easy-going, indolent, useless life is an existence worthy only of a cabbage. Life is fame. Ambition is *my* goal. For this I strive with all the energy of my nature. I am willing to sacrifice everything for fame. To be acknowledged as one of the ablest men of my age, and at last to be received into Westminster Abbey,—*that* would be life."

Now these persons, whom we have thus been fortunate enough to meet, one after another, though somewhat extreme, are still typical examples of very large classes of men and women. But if we criticise these ideals of life, even from a temporal standpoint, if we regard them for a moment without any reference to a future state of existence, their unsatisfactoriness must be very evident. It will be clear enough to us, at any

rate, if these ideals are not our own. It is always easy to see that others are in the wrong.

First of all, as to the money ideal. Though money may be very productive of good, the *love* of it is the root of all evil. As Dickens has very well said, and illustrated in the character of Ralph Nickleby, "Gold conjures up a mist about a man, more destructive of all his senses and dulling to his feelings than the fumes of charcoal." And, even if it be not loved for its own sake, it is so easy, so common, to exaggerate its power. It is but little after all, comparatively speaking, that money can accomplish. It may buy for us dozens of houses, but it cannot make one of them a home. It may purchase for us hundreds of acquaintances, but it cannot give us a single friend. So that to spend one's days in struggling only or chiefly for money is, surely, to mistake the husk of life for the kernel.

With regard to the second case, even if it could be proved,—which it cannot,—that pleasure was the only thing worth living for, still a reckless indulgence in it would be the supremest madness. Such indulgence necessarily outwits itself. It is inevitably followed by a weary sense of satiety and disgust that no amount of

enjoyment can ever afterwards dispel. Estimated from their own point of view, the lives of such men are failures. These men of pleasure are pre-eminently men of pain—

> "Who, by their own desire accomplished, bring
> Their own grey hairs in sorrow to the grave."

It is scarcely necessary to say anything about the third case. To go through life taking everything just as it comes, avoiding as far as possible all thought, all effort, all excitement, all enthusiasm, all individuality,—this, as our friend the ambitious man told us just now, is an ideal worthy only of a vegetable.

And with regard to ambition itself, what shall we say? It is a good thing in its way,—a very good thing. It has been called the last infirmity of noble minds. But it is not always an infirmity; it is oftener an inspiration. Without it human excellence would be much rarer than it is. Fame, however, as all who have enjoyed it testify, is never a sufficient recompense for the trouble expended in acquiring it. It is a useful motive, but a very poor reward.

> "Ambition's temple never yet
> Let in a well-contented guest;
> Some spoil unwon, some deed undone,
> Mars the sweet accents 'rest is won.'"

There is another ideal of life which is very commonly adopted just now, and that is the ideal of culture;—culture not in the sense of all-round, complete development, but in the contracted sense of merely intellectual and æsthetic education. In the last eloquent chapter of his 'Studies in the Renaissance,' Pater says: "Every moment some form grows perfect in hand or face; some tone on the hills or sea is choicer than the rest; some mood or passion of intellectual excitement is irresistibly attractive for us, and for that moment only. A counted number of pulses is given to us of a variegated life. We are all condemned to die. We have an interval, and then our place knows us no more. Our one chance is in getting into this interval as many pulsations as possible. Some spend it in listlessness, some in high passions, the wisest in art and song." But art and song, good though they be, do not satisfy the whole of our nature. We are something more than sensuous and æsthetic beings, and that something more is the crown and completion of our personality. The man with half his body paralysed is but half alive, and we are in a similar predicament if we destroy or ignore our spiritual nature. Nay, in a worse; for we are neglecting that part of our

being which is of paramount importance. Sir! you may obtain all that can be got for money, you may secure all the pleasures of sense and of intellect, you may surround yourself with the most refined productions of art, you may extract all possible sweetness from friendship and from love, you may be the idol of society and the admiration of the world,—but if there is nothing more in your existence, it is incomplete and imperfect,—unworthy of being called *life.*

Mark me! I do not underrate the world's ordinary pleasures and pursuits. I only say that they are not everything. I do not say that all your thoughts and attention should be exclusively devoted to your character; that would be an impossibility. There are few worse men in the world than the lying hypocrites who profess to care for nothing but what they call their souls. You have a complex nature, and you must live a complex life. But I do say that the spiritual element of your being is the highest, and that the acquisition of a noble character should be your chief concern; for character can never perish. All else that you possess can be yours, at the best, for but a few years longer. "The things which are seen are temporal:"

"Love, fame, ambition, avarice, 'tis the same;
For all are meteors with a different name,
And death the sable smoke, where vanishes the flame."

Nay, this earth of ours, which seems the very emblem of permanence, is doomed to come to an end. That wonderful power of renewing her youth, which Nature now possesses, she will not retain for ever. The sweet beauty that is coming back again to her face in this genial springtide will some day depart never to return. Science teaches us most certainly that our earth cannot always remain what and where it is. There will come a time when—

"Like the baseless fabric of a vision,
The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve;
And, like an insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind."

We cannot reconcile ourselves to the thought of this universal dissolution. There are within us immortal longings. In the presence of this yearning for eternal life, which possibly on this Easter day, by the power of association, is more than usually strong,—in the presence of this yearning for immortality, how paltry seems our little span of three score years and ten. We feel constrained mournfully to exclaim, "What

is our life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." "As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more." We cannot but feel that if death is to be the end of us, life is not worth the trouble of living. To many a man it brings a decided preponderance of suffering. Manifestly, if death ends all, it would have been better for that man if he had not been born,—better for him if he had been left in the rest of non-existence. And the thought of death will be even more grievous to us if our lives have been prosperous and happy. Oh the pity of it! if, just after we have tasted the joy of being, we must cease to be.

Twelve centuries and a half ago there was a discussion in the Court of Edwin, King of Northumbria, as to whether Christianity was a religion worthy of being adopted. An old Earl spoke as follows in its defence. "The life of man reminds me," he said, "of a sparrow which in the winter time flies through a well-lighted and well-heated hall. It enters by one door, and rapidly passes out by another. It has a brief escape from the chilling storms of rain and snow

without. It enjoys a momentary calm and shelter. But again it goes forth to another winter, and vanishes from our sight. So also seems the short life of man. Of what went before it, and what is to follow it, we know not. If this new doctrine brings us something more certain, it is in my mind worthy of adoption." The old Earl was right. It is one of the crowning glories of the Gospel, that it has brought life and immortality to light. We find in the New Testament that the doubt and despair, so often noticeable in the Old, have given place to a hopeful moral certainty. Job had asked anxiously and timidly, "If a man die, shall he live again?" The Psalmist had inquired, still more sceptically, "Wilt Thou show wonders to the dead? . . . Shall Thy loving-kindness be declared in the grave? . . . Shall Thy wonders be known in the dark; and Thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?" But St Paul declared without hesitation, —"God will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life."

Yes, the wages of virtue is not to be dust. It could not be, except in a universe that

was fundamentally irrational and immoral. As Tennyson finely says—

> "My own dim life should teach me this,
> That life shall live for evermore,
> Else earth is darkness at the core,
> And dust and ashes all that is."

Without immortality our present life is a ghastly mockery. The still, sad music of humanity is but an unceasing wail attending an infinite series of abortions,—hopes born only to be blighted, yearnings roused only to be crushed, beings created only to be destroyed. It is the future alone that redeems the present from contempt. When regarded as an opportunity for the development of "the power of an endless life" that is latent within us, when viewed in the light of eternity, our life on earth acquires infinite significance and value: it is no longer paltry; it is sublime.

But let us remember that eternal life—life in the highest and fullest sense of the word—comes only to those who seek it "by patient continuance in well-doing." It must be won by effort, conflict, suffering. There must be a *struggle for existence* in eternity as in time. Just as we only exist physically by resisting the adverse forces in sur-

rounding nature, so we can only exist spiritually if we conquer our ghostly enemies. Each of us has daily and hourly to choose,—to choose between right and wrong, between gratification and duty, between pleasing ourselves to the injury of others, and benefiting others at the cost of self-denial. To choose in the one way is easy, and at the time agreeable; but it means defeat and death. To choose in the other way is difficult, and at the time painful; but it means victory and life. To him that overcometh, *and to him alone,* is it granted to eat of the tree of life.

The Progress of Christianity.

"I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me."
—JOHN xii. 32.

IS there any proof that this prediction is likely to be fulfilled? Was not Christ too sanguine? Is not His influence already on the wane? Ten years ago a gifted poet sang a pæan on the supposed decay of Christianity, and he ventured to speak of the Cross of Calvary in the following terms:—

"It creaks and rocks to left and right,
Consumed of rottenness and rust,
Worm-eaten of the worms of night,
Dead as their spirits who put trust,
Round its base muttering as they sit,
In the time-cankered name of it."

Moreover, several of the leaders of thought in Europe have of late been asking the question, Are we still Christians? and answering this question in the negative. Let us look into the matter a little, and see how it actually stands.

In the first place, I would remark that those who honestly disbelieve in Christianity are ignorant of the actual nature of that religion. They have either mistaken its accidents for its essence, or they have accepted for a portrait what is only a caricature. Like Strauss, perhaps, they imagine that it is opposed to industry and commerce; or, like Swinburne, that it is synonymous with priestcraft; or, like James Mill, that it is but another name for Calvinism. The Saviour has been injured far more by unconscious misrepresentations than by any openly avowed hostility. He Himself foretold that there would arise false teachers, and that they would deceive many. His prophecy has been strangely, sadly fulfilled. All kinds of absurdities and blasphemies have been shouted forth by persons suffering under the mad delusion that they were preaching the gospel. There have been men calling themselves Christians, who have said that the sweetest music of heaven would be the wailings of the lost in hell. There have been men calling themselves Christians, who have maintained that God created the vast majority of mankind for the express purpose of consigning them to everlasting flames, in order that He might be, as they strangely term it, glorified. There have

been men calling themselves Christians, whose religion has consisted in breaking on the wheel or burning at the stake those who differed, on certain doctrinal points, from themselves. There have been men calling themselves Christians, who have asserted that the grossest sins they might please to commit, after what they dignified with the name of conversion, would be matters of the most perfect indifference. There have been men calling themselves Christians, who were remarkable for nothing save the conceited ignorance of the bigot, the Satanic fury of the persecutor, the childish puerilities of the formalist, or the sickening cant of the hypocrite. Now, so long as any one believes that such men are the genuine representatives of the teaching of Christ, he cannot be censured for refusing to call himself a Christian. You remember in Goethe's wonderful drama, when Marguerite makes anxious inquiries about Faust's theological opinions, he tells her he cannot accept any of the religions with which he is acquainted. She asks him why. He answers, "Even from religiousness;" meaning that these religions appeared to him, rightly or wrongly, to violate what he believed to be eternally sacred moral principles. All honour to the men who refuse

to accept a blasphemous representation of the Deity! Such men, when they come to know the real Christ, will be among His most zealous disciples. Already they

> "Adore and worship when they know it not;
> Pious beyond the intention of their thought,
> Devout beyond the meaning of their will."

Whenever Christ has been understood, He has been invariably admired, and more or less believed in, if not loved. In a former sermon I mentioned the names of a number of illustrious men who had all testified enthusiastic admiration for Jesus of Nazareth; and I gave you some examples of the terms in which they had spoken of Him. Christ has been eulogised not only by those who profess to be entirely consecrated to His service, not only by the ignorant and unlettered, who might possibly be the slaves of an unreasoning fanaticism,—but nearly all the greatest minds of the last eighteen hundred years, though holding the most divergent religious opinions, and differing in regard to almost every other subject on which they wrote, have been unanimous in their praise of Jesus. Whenever men have caught a glimpse of the real Christ, they have invariably felt drawn to Him by an irresistible fascination. No one, except

through ignorance or misconception, has ever formed any but the highest estimate of the Saviour's character and work.

In the second place, I would remark that Christ and His Gospel are inextricably bound up with the future progress of the world. This has been acknowledged over and over again by men belonging to the strictest school of literary and historical criticism. For example, in a paper read some years ago before the Institute of France, M. Troplong said, "Christian philosophy lies at the root of our principles of right." M. Renan, too, has declared that "to tear the name of Jesus from the world would be to shake it to its very foundations." That this is no rhetorical exaggeration, but mere sober fact, you may see if you will call to mind the moral reformations and the social improvements which can be indisputably traced to the teaching of the Nazarene. The poet from whom I just now quoted speaks as if Christ had accomplished nothing.

> "The nineteenth wave of the ages rolls
> Now deathward since His death and birth.
> Has He fed full men's starved-out souls?
> Has He brought freedom upon earth?
> Or are there less oppressions done
> On this wild world beneath the sun?"

Nothing but the most bitter prejudice could

lead an educated man to speak like this. The world is resonant with voices that contradict him, if he would but unstop his ears. Think first of the wonderful influence Christ has exerted upon individual lives. It is a fact, not less certain than any in the physical sciences, that the story of His self-sacrificing love has purified some of the vilest hearts, and brought many of the most abandoned of the devil's votaries to the very feet of God. It is a fact, which no one can even hesitate to admit, that He has inspired vast numbers of His followers with such a passionate devotion, that they have for His sake endured the loss of all things, and have counted it all joy that they were thought worthy to suffer shame for Christ. It is a fact no less incontrovertible, that a yet vaster company—"a multitude which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues,"—though coming short of entire self-surrender, have yet loved and served Him to the best of their ability, faithfully though fitfully; sometimes forsaking Him, yet always returning to Him again. Moreover, there are many who have caught something of His own divine spirit of self-abnegation, and who know not, or scarcely know, from whence it comes. Of all the best and noblest men now living,

whether they profess to be Christ's disciples or not, it may without hesitation be affirmed that they are ready to deny themselves for the welfare of others, and that, to a greater or less extent, they have merged their own life and wellbeing in the life and wellbeing of the race. From whom can they have learnt this enthusiasm for humanity if not from the crucified Nazarene?

Think once more how successful Christ has been in changing men's opinions as to the right and the good and the beautiful. In all these matters He was opposed to the most brilliant intellects of Greece, and in the conflict *they* have been vanquished, *He* has been victorious. I cannot now work this out in detail. I cannot dwell upon the reformations He has effected in giving liberty to slaves, in elevating the social position of women, in getting men to believe in the manliness of pity, the beauty of humility, the dignity of labour, and the sanctity of marriage. These are, after all, but necessary consequences or deductions from His golden rule, by which rule He completely revolutionised the whole of the world's moral ideas.

Just contrast the commonplace morality of to-day,—I will not say with the ordinary notions that

were prevalent before the time of Christ,—but compare it with the teaching of the best and wisest philosophers. Plato somewhere congratulates the Athenians on having exhibited towards the Persians a pure and heartfelt hatred. But to-day any one would be considered a barbarian if he were to utter a similar sentiment. Aristotle's description of the ideal man—the large-souled or high-minded man, as he called him—is one that we cannot now read without a smile. He who occupies himself solely with honour, walking with a stately gait, speaking with an imperious voice, despising the majority of his neighbours, but receiving a certain amount of dignified enjoyment, where the illustrious treat him with respect,—such a man Christ has taught us to regard, not as great, but as pitifully, contemptibly small.

The fundamental moral principles of Jesus, His golden rule, His new commandment, His doctrine of the brotherhood of humanity, His substitution of self-denial for self-aggrandisement as the test of human excellence,—these ideas have been adopted by almost every thinker of repute.[1]

[1] How it was Christ succeeded in getting men to adopt the golden rule, when Buddha and Confucius comparatively failed, I have elsewhere endeavoured to explain.—'Defects of Modern Christianity, and other Sermons,' pp. 218-230.

You will find them permeating the writings even of the Positivists. John Stuart Mill, in his tract on Utilitarianism, says that, when we have received a proper moral education, the feeling of unity with our fellow-men will be as deeply rooted in our consciousness as the horror of particular crimes; the good of others will be to us a thing naturally and necessarily to be attended to, like any of the physical conditions of existence; we shall be unable to conceive the possibility of getting personal happiness by conduct opposed to the general good; and we shall never think of, or desire, any beneficial condition for ourselves in which others are not included. This is, of course, neither more nor less than an exposition of the ethical doctrines of our Lord.

There are many signs that human conduct is now being increasingly regulated according to the law of Christ. There never was so much philanthropy in the world: witness our ragged-schools and asylums and reformatories, our Hospital Sundays and Saturdays, our Oxford and Cambridge Missions in Whitechapel and Bethnal Green. There never was so much sympathy: witness the increased tolerance for diversity of opinion, the increased courtesy of controversialists, the growing tendency to dwell upon the

good side of men and systems, and to pass lightly over the evil. Humanity really seems to be making progress—very slow, no doubt, but still steady progress—towards that happy state,

> "When each shall find his own in all men's good,
> And all shall work in noble brotherhood."

Now in the marked increase of self-sacrifice, and the growing recognition of its importance, we may discover a striking proof of the increasing influence of Jesus. We saw, when we were discussing the connection between self-denial and self-development, the immense importance which Christ attached to self-denial; that He regarded it as absolutely essential for the perfecting of the individual and of the race, both for this life and for the life which is to come. He made the possession of a loving, self-sacrificing spirit the test of genuine discipleship. Shortly before the end He summed up His teaching in the words, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another. . . . By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another." We noticed, too, that He insisted strongly on the necessity of His disciples loving Him, mainly because He knew that nothing could so stimulate them to unselfishness as personal devotion to Him, who "came not to be ministered

unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." "If a man love Me," said our Lord, "he will keep My words." In the growing appreciation and practice of self-denial, then, we cannot fail to see the gradual accomplishment of the Saviour's purpose, the progressive fulfilment of the prophecy of our text.

If there be any such thing as certainty, if there be any meaning in the word fact, if there be any credibility in experience, if there be any truth in history, if there be any critical discernment in the world's greatest thinkers, it is demonstrated, beyond the possibility of doubt, that the amelioration effected in our race by Christ is already incalculably great. From the Cross of the despised Nazarene a flood of glory has radiated over the ages, and it is illumining our own with undiminished, nay, with ever increasing brightness. Christ has inspired much of what is sweetest and noblest in music and painting and literature. Christ has given us all that is most beautiful in our social intercourse, in our friendships, in our homes. Christ has shed a light upon the mystery of existence, making us to see the infinite possibilities of our nature, and transforming the despair of humanity into hope. Wherever we find progress in love and right and freedom

and toleration and peace and hope, there we can trace the influence of Christ. And, since it is more and more generally acknowledged that the progress still to be desired can only be effected upon Christian principles; since, further, the number of those who act upon these principles is continually on the increase,—we are compelled to admit that the crucified Jesus has been, is being, and will yet be, the Saviour of the world.

O Christ! we feel drawn to Thee to-day. Thou hast revealed to us the value of our manhood. Thou hast taught us the beauty of holiness, the grandeur of self-sacrifice, the divinity of Love. Our lives have been illumined by the brightness of Thy glory. Thine agony has ennobled us. With thy stripes we have been healed. We thank, we praise, we love Thee.

THE END.

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